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# Dialogue

A Journal Devoted to Literary Appreciation

Volume VII

Number I

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Special Issue on Indian Poetics and Western Thought



# Dialogue

*A Journal Devoted to Literary Appreciation*

*Dialogue: A Journal Devoted to Literary Appreciation* is a bi-annual journal published in June and December. It aims at providing a better understanding of the polyphonic literary text. It envisages the text not as an autonomous entity but as convergence where literary and extra literary concerns interact and influence in subtle ways. The journal is committed to register the responses of young and senior scholars who approach a text as dialogue across cultures, literatures, themes, concepts and genres and focus on the excellences of literature as viewed in various critical contexts, promoting a literary appreciation of the text.

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## Our Contributors



This issue of  
*Dialogue*  
is  
dedicated to  
the memory of  
*Anand K Coomaraswamy,*  
a noted scholar of  
Indian Aesthetics



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This issue of  
*Dialogue*  
is  
dedicated to  
*Ruskin Bond,*  
a noted  
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## EDITORIAL

Undoubtedly, the reference of Indian poetics takes a critical reader to the rich past of India when aestheticians like Bharatmuni, Bhamaha, Dandin, Mummat, Kuntaka, Sankuka, Bhoj, Kshemendra, Anadavardhan, Rajshekhar, Abinavagupta and Pandit Jagannath since 500 B C Till 16th century ruminated on the nature and variety of literary forms and expounded critical concepts like *Rasa*, *Alamkara*, *Riti*, *Guna*, *Vakrokti*, *Auchitya* and *Dhwani*. etc. Their critical concepts and meticulous textual exegesis not only enriched Sanskrit literature but also left lasting effects on the critical strategies of all the regional languages of the country over the ages. Their prime belief in the power of the word and its impact on the psyche of the audience/spectator, and the way an aesthetic experience brings about a transformation of one's self has elevated the status of literary art to that of spiritual experience.

A comparative study of Indian poetics and western critical concepts presents striking resemblances and differences in critical thrusts and methods : their points of convergence wonderfully exhibit how Indian aestheticians and western critics right from Aristotle to the Eliot generation have common quests and concerns regarding the nature and impact of literary experience, cutting barriers of time and place. If Bharata's *Rasa* Theory around 500 B C India and Aristotle's concept of *catharsis* in 335 B C Greece both target a state of 'aesthetic pleasure' through dramatic performances, should we not believe in theory of unity in universal experience that causes humans of the world to broach upon the same subjects cutting barriers of place and time? On the other hand, despite ruminating on the same subjects as nature of aesthetic experience or the impact of art, their different 'stresses' speak but for their different cultural orientations which are more powerful in matters of critical formulations. Hence, a comparative study of any Indian critical concept with a western one must take into account the variness of the cultural spaces and must avoid prioritizing one over the other, or the role of the dispassionate reader would be at stake.

It is also evident from the history of literary thought in the world that ideas do not accept the monopolies of nations, they travel from one country to another, and new concepts and theories are evolved out of them by the intellectuals for the benefit of future generations who adopt and adept them according to the needs of their time and culture. Indian scholars, specially in English, should be proud of possessing a rich critical tradition preserved in Sanskrit poetics and Tamil critical texts; they should come forward to popularize it by producing lucid commentaries on difficult critical concepts; they should make judicious applications of these theories on literary texts : Indian or world literature, the careful application of Indian critical concepts and theories will lead them to innovate new theories and assimilate modern theories for a better appreciation of literature. It is true, no nation can excel by ignoring its native critical tradition that embodies its social and cultural ethos over the ages but literary experience and its formulations are beyond binaries of all sorts, and one has to be open to learn from other knowledge systems and evolve something new from what one already possesses.

Sudheer C. Hajela



## Indian Poetics and Western Thought

Bhanumati Mishra

Years of studying English literature and criticism, had left me sterile to Indian empirical tradition of critical thought. Although, I had never once doubted the antiquity of Indian literary theories as predecessors of the Western poetics, yet I could never muster enough courage to confront and compare Indian poetics with Western poetics out of fear that the former would fall short in contemporariness, taxonomy and applicability to the post-modern literature. A factor which contributed to my apprehensiveness was also the study of the huge body of work starting from Bharata to Aurobindo and Aristotle to Kafka-which seemed a daunting task in the absence of a true guru and a relevant reference point to begin with. That, studying Indian poetics was not fashionable was also a reason which I must admit.

However, as an M Phil student and a Research Scholar at IIT- Kanpur in 1988, my association with my guide and mentor Dr. Vineet Chaitanya was a turning point. Being an expert in Computer systems analysis as well as Indian philosophy (especially Panini's *Ashtadhyayi*), his erudition was awe-inspiring. He, along with Dr Rajeev Sangal, not only guided me in my thesis in Computational Linguistics titled 'An Approach to Machine Translation among Indian Languages' (Tech Report TRCS-89-90, Dept. of CSE, IIT-Kanpur, Dec 1989) but also enlightened me on the relevance of Panini and Sanskrit Vyakarana in Machine Translation. My thesis therefore was the first to attempt the study of Indian languages independently in NLP (Natural Language Processing) based on Sanskrit grammar. Dr Vineet chaitanya questioned the suitability of the direct adoption of western linguistic theories and brought out the urgency to take up Indian Aesthetics and literary criticism as a comparative study to Western literary theories. The long discussions on Indian philology and philosophical thought with many visiting Professors of eminence opened a new vision for someone like me who was fresh out of college. I was at the crossroads. Having read and appreciated only English literature since the time I learnt the alphabets, I was confronted and brought face to face with my legacy and felt that the onus of carrying the tradition of critical thinking was suddenly mine. But, where and how do I begin? Like a true guru, Dr Chaitanya left me with more questions than answers.

I am sure I echo the predicament of scores of Indian scholars of English literature who have no clue on how to critically evaluate our literary tradition and how to assess the western theories and how to reconcile the two. We suffer from a deep sense of guilt for not adequately recognizing our treasure-trove and identifying ourselves with our true intellectual legacy. Instead, we have for years lived in self-denial, and fear of being branded 'obsolete and impractical'. This unquestioning, uncritical reception of western theory has resulted in the intellectual subordination of the Indian critical mind to the western academy. The educated Indian has been reduced to an intellectual pigmy who has entered into a receiver-donor relationship with the west. For him, west is the only way to look towards for superior thought. In order to counter this 'de-intellectualization' we need to re-locate the Indian mind in the Indian thought.

Prof. Namvar Singh, who chaired an India International Centre discussion in 1998, uses the phrase 'colonized criticism'. He pointed out that there is a hegemonistic tendency to interpret every text in English terms. Our vocabulary has been forced into hibernation by the vocabulary of the west. But hearteningly, unlike the Greek and Latin words which are sparsely used by the speakers of English today, the vocabulary of the Indian thought as written in the Sanskrit texts is now the ordinary language vocabulary of the ordinary speakers of modern Indian languages. Alluding

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to Bhartrhari he said that while he could understand the western scholar's unfamiliarity with this Indian philosopher of language, but the Indian scholar's ignorance or indifference towards the works of this great theoretician was academically indefensible.

Unfortunately this inherited learning at present finds no place in the mainstream education. It has been restricted either to special institutes or 'sanctuaries'. Indian theoretical texts continue to be marginalized in the university syllabi. The UGC exercise in curriculum development has been nothing more than a pendulum swing between British literature and new emerging literatures and as far as literary theory or criticism is concerned, it makes a concession and says that Indian literary thinking could be 'an optional' part of the theory paper. There is not enough application based research taking place in our institutions-which is needed badly to validate the classical frameworks by establishing their adequacy and relevance. As this has not happened on the desired scale, the need of the hour is to evaluate the Indian theoretical frameworks in terms of contemporary literatures.

India has powerful, attested, tradition of texts and thinkers in a wide range of disciplines like philosophy, grammar, poetics, prosody, astronomy, architecture, mathematics, medicine, ethics (*dharmasastra*), politics, music, logic, weaponry, and art of warfare. The texts of these disciplines are enshrined mainly in Sanskrit. They not only make statements about the respective domains of knowledge but also enshrine the empirical wisdom gathered by our society over centuries in these spheres.

Had the classical knowledge enshrined in Sanskrit, Pali and Prakrit texts and some of it preserved as adaptation in Old Tamil texts been made a part of the mainstream education it would have enabled the educated Indian to interact with the west on a level ground. Efforts to incorporate it or teach it have been politically opposed and condemned as 'revivalism'. Europe's 13th century onwards successful venture of relocating the European mind in its classical Greek roots is lauded and expounded in the Indian universities as 'revival of learning' and as 'Renaissance'. But when it comes to India, the political intellectuals dismiss exactly the same venture as 'revivalism' or 'obscurantism'. And there are more such terms like for example- 'traditional' and 'ancient' - the person working in Indian studies is put on the defensive by these nomenclatures. 'Tradition' is falsely opposed to 'modern' and the word 'traditional' is equated with oral and given an illegitimate pejorative value. And the adjective 'ancient' as pre-fixed - 'Panini, the ancient grammarian', 'ancient Indian poetics or ancient philosophical thought'- makes the classical Indian thinkers and thought look antiquated. No western writer ever refers to Plato, for example, as 'ancient' or Greek thought as 'ancient'. This psychic jugglery is directed at the continuity of Indian intellectual traditions suggesting as it does a break in the intellectual history. If at all there is one it happens with the foundation of the English education and then too it is a horizontal difference between the mainstream education system and the traditional institutes of learning and not a vertical disjoint.

For those who believe that this knowledge of the Indian poetics is now archaic would do well to recall that the contemporary western theories, though essentially interpretive, have evolved from Europe's 19th century interaction with Sanskrit philosophy, grammar and poetics; they would care to remember that Roman Jakobson, Trubetzkoy and de Saussure were Sanskritists, that Saussure was in fact a Professor of Sanskrit at Geneva and that his published papers include work on Sanskrit poetics. The structural, formalist thinking and the linguistic turn of contemporary theory have



their pedigree in Sanskrit thought. In this, Europe's highly fruitful interaction with the Indian thought over practically the same time-span contrasts sharply with 150 years of sterile Indian interaction with the western thought. After the founding of Sanskrit chairs in the first decade of the nineteenth century, Europe interacted with the Indian thought, particularly in philosophy, grammar, literary theory and literature, in a big way without abandoning its own powerful tradition. In the process, it created, as we have said a new discipline, Historical-Comparative Linguistics, producing a galaxy of thinkers like Schiller, Schelling, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Jakobson, Trubetzkoy and above all Saussure - and founding a revolutionary conceptual framework which was to influence the European thought for the next century called Structuralism.

Alienated from the roots, caught in the web of conflicting schemas, unable to interact with western scholarship on a level ground, we have failed to produce in the last 150 years any thinker or thought. The possible exceptions, Swami Ramakrishna Paramhansa, Swami Vivekananda, Sri Aurobindo, Mahatma Gandhi, are interestingly those who consciously located themselves in the Indian tradition and are oriented towards its metaphysical thought.

Awareness of this sterility, and its cause, has slowly grown. There is an increasing assertion in the country of the need to remedy this state, to reverse this data-theory relationship between the Indian academy and the western academy by relocating the Indian mind in its multiple, classical traditions of thought, in what has always been a precursor donor tradition. This is how we achieve the political and economic freedoms by the freedom of the mind. In this perspective, in literary studies, we must re-activate Indian frameworks in the university syllabi.

Grammar is the foundation of any language and therefore it forms the basis of poetics. This paper shall first focus on the influence that Indian grammarians wielded over the western thought. It argues the suitability of the Sanskrit grammar as coded in Panini's *Ashtadhyayi* as the foundation to most linguistic theories in the world. Panini's theory of morphological analysis as formulated in the 5th century BC was more advanced than any equivalent Western theory before the mid 20th century. His analysis of noun compounds, still forms the basis of modern linguistic theories of compounding which have borrowed Sanskrit terms such as *bahuvrihi* and *dvandva*. His genius lies in the brevity and completeness of his analysis which is unmatched in any ancient grammar of any language. Panini's work became known in 19th century Europe where it influenced modern linguistics.

Panini's grammar consists of nearly 4,000 rules or *sutras* divided into eight chapters or *adhyayas*. It provides a collection of 2,000 roots. Being composed with the maximum conceivable brevity, this grammar describes the entire Sanskrit language in all the details of its structure, with a unity which has never been equaled elsewhere. It is once the shortest and fullest grammar in the world. Sanskrit's potential for scientific use was greatly enhanced as a result of the thorough systemization of its grammar by Panini. On the basis of just under 4000 sutras [rules expressed as aphorisms], he built virtually the whole structure of the Sanskrit language, whose general shape hardly changed for the next two thousand years.

Ferdinand de Saussure, who is widely considered the father of modern structural linguistics, lectured on Sanskrit for three decades. In his *Memoire sur le systeme primitif des voyelles dans les langues indo-europennes* (Memoir on the Original System of Vowels) helps



the Indo-European Languages) published in 1879, mentions Indian grammar as an influence on his idea. In his *De l'emploi du genitif absolu en sanscrit* (On the Use of the Genitive Absolute in Sanskrit) published in 1881, he specifically mentions Panini as an influence on the work. His idea of the unity of signifier-signified in the sign is similar to the notion of *Spṛṣṭa* in Indian poetics.

Discussing the impact of Indian ideas on language in Europe, Frits Staal states that European exposure to the formal rules of Paninian grammar was such that Ferdinand de Saussure in 1894 and later Noam Chomsky in 1957 introduced formal rules in computational languages. Frits Staal has written that "Panini is the Indian Euclid. Noam Chomsky has always acknowledged his debt to Panini for his modern notion of an explicit generative grammar. More importantly, the very idea that formal rules can be applied to areas outside of logic or mathematics was born out of Europe's contact with the work of Sanskrit grammarians.

The influence of Panini on the founding father of American structuralism, Leonard Bloomfield, can be seen in his 1927 paper "On some rules of Panini". In Optimality Theory, the hypothesis about the relation between specific and general constraints is known as "Panini's Theorem on Constraint Ranking". Paninian grammars have also been devised for non-Sanskrit languages. His work was the forerunner to modern formal language theory (mathematical linguistics) and formal grammar, and has been a precursor to computing.

Panini's grammar can be considered to be the world's first formal system, well before the 19th century innovations of Gottlob Frege and the subsequent development of mathematical logic. To design his grammar, Panini used the method of "auxiliary symbols," in which new affixes are designated to mark syntactic categories and the control of grammatical derivations. This technique was rediscovered by the logician Emil Post and is now a standard method in the design of computer programming languages. Sanskritists now accept that Panini's linguistic apparatus is well-described as an "applied" Post system. Considerable evidence shows ancient mastery of context-sensitive grammars, and a general ability to solve many complex generative problems. Emil Post is Panini's modern counterpart, showing the relationship between a computationally typical natural language grammar and universal computation.

Dr. Rajeev Sangal, Director of IIIT (Hyderabad) and co-author of, *Natural Language Processing - A Panini Perspective*, is an expert on language computation. According to him Panini's epic treatise on grammar came to the rescue of language experts in making English unambiguous. English is more difficult (as far as machine translations are concerned) with a high degree of ambiguity. Some words have different meanings, making the analysis (to facilitate translations) a difficult process. Making it disambiguous is quite a task, where Panini's principles might be of use. Besides the technical side, Panini is of great help to researchers on the translation engine on the language side too. A good number of words in almost all the Indian languages originate from Sanskrit. "That is great because Indian languages are related to each other," Prof. Sangal points out. The earlier efforts failed to take the meanings of the words contextually. Citing the example of the word 'bank', he points out that the earlier efforts would not make out whether it was a bank used in the expression river bank, or a bank that deals with money. In the present project called *Sampark* being developed by his team, words are cross-linked with all the synonyms in the other language. This helps resolve the ambiguity problem, the knottiest one in the translation process. For



the machine to understand the sentence - The Chair chairs the meeting-, a concept dictionary would look at the context and tell apart the meaning of the two chairs in the sentence. Earlier, rules were given to the machine to follow. Now, algorithms help let the machines learn from this. This way Artificial intelligence approach has been combined with the traditional linguistic process to further the research in Computational linguistics.

Traditional Indian grammar is based on a comprehensive *Karaka* theory. There is consistent use of *Akaanksha-yogyataa* requirement as a fundamental principle of grammar. Generative grammar has unanimously treated the relation between active and passive as derivational. The active is taken as basic and the passive is derived from it by syntactic rules or by a lexical rule in the theory of Bresnan (1978). Whereas for Panini active sentences are in no sense more basic than passive sentences, they are alternative realisations of the same underlying structure.

On the one hand, western linguistics describes the relation between the structure of the sentence and that of the nominals by giving them parallel expansions in the phrase structure using X-bar theory. On the other hand for Panini, the sentences are no more basic than nominals and vice-versa. He generates them by rules which are not just parallel but - aside from morphological details - identical (Kiparsky; 82). Another fundamental way in which Panini's *karaka* theory differs from the western linguistics is the use of *Vaktr-Vivaksha* and *Laukika-vivaksha* concept; roughly meaning the individual speaker's intent and the intent of a whole community of speakers who speak a particular language, respectively.

One great virtue of the Paninian system is that it operates at the level of roots and affixes defining a deeper level of analysis than afforded by recent approaches like generalized phrase structure grammars that have been inspired by developments in computer parsing techniques. This allows for one to include parts of the lexicon in the definition of the grammatical structure. Closeness between languages that share a great deal of a lexicon will thus be represented better using a Paninian structure. These fundamental investigations that have bearing on linguistics, knowledge representation, and natural language processing by computers require collaboration between computer scientists and Sanskritists.

Computer oriented studies on it would also help to introduce AI (Artificial Intelligence), logic, and cognitive science as additional areas of study in the Sanskrit departments of universities. This would allow the Sanskrit departments to complement the program of the computer science departments. With the incorporation of these additional areas, a graduate of Sanskrit could hope to make useful contributions to the computer software industry as well, particularly in the fields of natural language processing and artificial intelligence. We can therefore clearly see that at an academic as well as practical level, a study of Indian linguistic theories can give a big boost to traditional Sanskrit *Vyakarana* studies, linguistics and artificial intelligence. All that is needed is a national will and a national effort.

Now coming to the influence of Indian poetics on that of the western thought, A. Keith in his *History of Sanskrit Literature* holds the view that Bharata's (father of Indian poetics) time was before Bhasa. Bhasa is held to be a few centuries earlier than Kalidasa who is assigned 2nd century B.C. Under these circumstances it seems reasonable to infer that Bharata must have lived a few centuries before Aristotle who belongs to 4th



century B.C. It is also necessary to note that research scholars have considered on sufficient evidence that the bulk of *Natya Sastra* of Bharata is only a compilation of portions from the earlier texts on the subject. This pushes the date of literature on poetics in India far earlier than either Aristotle, or Plato or Socrates.

It should be recalled that in the West, Aristotle's *Poetics* is the only book available on the subject with twenty six small chapters. Aristotle being a genius, there are instances in the treatise when his mind touches the fringes of profound thought. However his statements are not satisfactory to the mind trained in the Indian Poetics. He says "poet is a maker of fables". What he means by poetry is simply fiction. The bulk of his work deals with dramaturgy. There is one important thing to note in the 25th chapter, which is absent, in our works of poetics: it is on the principles of literary criticism. Aristotle generally agrees with Indian poetics on the question of what constitutes the soul of poetry.

Although poetry appeared in many countries of the world since time immemorial, it was only in India that an enquiry started on the questions as to what is poetry, how it could be treated, and why it should be written. In the wake of this enquiry, a large body of scientific knowledge regarding the mechanics of poetry and its purpose developed and began expanding through the centuries. We have a plethora of evidence about this in the *Vedic* literature, *Ramyaana* and *Mahabharata*. The great Bhamaha's book on poetics was sadly not available to us till 1909 when the text of Bhamaha was published for the first time in the Bombay Sanskrit Series by K.P. Trivedi as an appendix to Vidyanatha's *Prataparudra* and *Yasobhushana*. However from the *Natyasastra* of Bharata onwards, all the literature on poetics is not only available but also remains intact with a tradition of being read by scholars and taught to the students of literature in Sanskrit even to this day.

In India, there has been no break in the continuous and cumulative intellectual traditions in different domains of knowledge. Evidence comes from the ordinary language of the people. The technical terms of various disciplines continue not only to exist but have become common words of ordinary use in almost all the languages of India. Witness for example the first two technical terms of Panini's *Astadhyayi* - *vridhi* and *guna* - these 7th century B.C. grammatical terms that are today words of daily use in a shared sense in all the Indian languages. The whole terminology of Indian literary theories - *rasa*, *dhvani*, *alamkara*, *vakrokti*, etc. - is the living vocabulary of Indian languages. It is not just a question of continuity of words - it means that the concepts are alive and they continue to be understood and are, therefore, relevant.

The scientific knowledge that developed in this country on the dialectics of poetry, falls into some outstanding schools of thought and theory like the *Rasa* theory of Bharata, the *Alamkara* theory of Bhamaha, the *Riti* theory of Vamana and the *Dwani* theory of Anandavardhan who commenting on poetics says, "*putras te jataha dhanam te dassyaami iti vaakyarthah dhijanyasya aahlaadasya na lokottaravatvam. ataha na tasmin vaakye kaavyatva prasaktihi.*" This means sentences like 'son is born to you', and 'I am giving you money' though produce immense pleasure, have no poetry in them. Because, they do not produce that uncommon pleasure which is not the same as the pleasure derived from the ordinary worldly experience.

Rasa theory blossoms beginning with the Sanskrit text *Natyashastra* (*natya* meaning "drama" and *shastra* meaning 'science'), a work attributed to Bharata Muni where the



Gods declare that drama is the 'Fifth *Veda*' because it is suitable for the degenerate age as the best form of religious instruction. The date of composition varies wildly among scholars, ranging from the era of Plato and Aristotle to the seventh century CE. The *Natyashastra* presents the aesthetic concepts of *rasas* and their associated *bhavas*, which appear to be independent of the work as a whole. Eight *rasas* and associated *bhavas* are named and their enjoyment is likened to savoring a meal: *rasa* is the enjoyment of flavors that arise from the proper preparation of ingredients and the quality of ingredients.

The concepts of creativity and the creative process are found to be completely different. The paradigm artist in Indian thought, for example, is the potter as against the carpenter in Western thought. The carpenter cuts, segments and re-arranges his material reality (the wood) and is therefore a 'maker'. The potter's material reality (the clay) is like water in the ocean not measurable or segmentable and the potter therefore does not 'make' - he merely manifests a form that is inherent in the material and is present in his mind. The potter is not the 'master' but a *sadhaka*, a devotee, a *Yogi* who yokes his mind to the object and gives form to the substance.

The affinities and differences between the western literary theories and the Indian poetics can be explored through a study of the correspondences between *Alamkar* and the rhetorical school; Indian theory of *Guna* and *Dosa*, in stylistics and the western theory of form; *Vakrokti* and oblique poetry; *Svabhavokti* and statement poetry; *Aucitya* and decorum; *Dhvani* and suggestion; *Rasa* and pleasure. Indian theory of *Sphota* and Derrida's theory of *Ecriture*; the idea of imitation in Bharata and Aristotle. It concludes that a comparison of Indian poetics with western thought immensely enriches the domain of poetics itself in its variety and scope.

Cultural specificity of theories can therefore be problematic if the theories of one culture are applied uncritically to the empirical reality of another culture. There are the Indian habits of mind and there are the western habits of mind nurtured over time by the specificity of the community's experience and these may differ crucially. It is these habits of mind that are imbricated deeply in the respective conceptual frameworks. The western linearity of time and thought with its in-built evolutionary imperative that is implicit in such structures as 'pre-X-post A' (*pre-colonial, colonial, post-colonial*), contrasts sharply with the Indian schema of cyclic and simultaneity. Similarly, the western binarism and the search for certainty differ from the either-or both schema and the uncertainty schema of the Indian mind. The list is long - the teleological anxiety, the apocalyptic vision, the wait for the millennium, the redeemed expectation, the anthropological centrism, the conception of man as a sinner, a vengeful God, an ethics contingent on a personal God - all these western constructs offer conceptual opposition to the Indian habits of mind, at least to the non-Hebraic habits of mind.

Dr. Albert Schweitzer (1875-1965) a great thinker wrote a book titled *Indian Thought and Its Development* (1935). It deals mainly with the ethics contained in the *Vedas*, *Upanishads*, *Shastras*, *Puranas*, *Brahmanas*, *Aranyakas*, the epics, and the mythologies. The teachings of Masters like the Buddha and Mahavira, etc., are so deep, vast, varied, often innerly contradictory, yet mostly liberal, synthesized and symbiotic, that no single individual, much less a westerner, could really be able to do justice to the subject in the matter of comprehension and interpretation. And much of Indian philosophy is based on living faith and felt spiritual experiences. He thinks that the



Indian world-view has remained basically mystical. Indians were so much more mentally and spiritually evolved than the Europeans. It could be said that Dr. Albert Schweitzer had made a profound study of the then available English and German texts on Indian thoughts. On the whole, he shows high regard for Indian thinking. Yet, he had not reckoned with original unparalleled Indian texts such as *Manusmriti*, *Kamasutra*, and *Arthashastra* etc which are not about world and life-negation but about their affirmation.

The 5th century philosopher of language, Bhartrhari, in the penultimate *karika* of the second khandha of his celebrated *Vakyapadiya* says:

The intellect acquires critical acumen by familiarity with different traditions. How much does one really understand by merely following one's own reasoning only? (Ka-484).

That was the self-respecting voice of an intellectually confident India with its interactive, contending yet collaborative traditions of thought beautifully recalled and critiqued in the 13th century by Sri Madhavacharya in his *Sarvadarsanasangraha*. However, in today's de-intellectualized India, we have to say: "What does he know who does not know his own tradition?"

According to the *Advaita* model propagated by Adi Shankaracharya, *Brahma* exists in everything animate or inanimate, but not in any one unit alone, and it is this model that informs Indian thinking across discipline even to this day. Thus, in literary theory, Rajasekhara in his familiar legendary mode describes how particular form or style or theme of composers originate at 'X' and then spreads and proliferates in different parts of this geographic entity called (*chakravarti ksetra*, a territory bounded like a wheel but internally differentiated) and takes local habitation and name, from the local cultures. Sanskrit literary theory, as Professor AK Warder pointed out long time back, is empirical - it follows widespread practice; it does not prescribe; it describes. Bharata's *Natyashastra* continues to be the text of *sravya-preksha* (aural-visual) performances such as *yaksa-gana* of Karnataka, *kathakali* of Kerala, *baul* performances of Bengal and the folk dances of Punjab, Gujarat and Rajasthan, etc. To understand the relationship between the learned tradition and the popular tradition in India, all we have to do is to examine the relationship between Valmiki's *Ramayana* as the archetypal texts and the innumerable *Ramlilas* performed in towns and villages of North India. There is the same type - token relationship that we have talked about in one of the earlier sections - a construct is articulated and realized in a number of ways but all of them are recognizable as expressions of the given construct. This is a very valid model of the combination of the global and the local and this is in fact the defining characteristic of a good theory.

India's visible ethnography contradicts the European one-language-one-nation-one-state model and thus enables west and western inspired political thinkers to say that India is not a nation but a combination of nationalities. This theory is negated by Indian experience - you stand in a queue in any one of the four major *dhama*, places of pilgrimage in the four corners of the country - Badrinath, Rameshwaram, Dwarka, Jagannathpuri - and you find that you are among people who are ethnically different and speak different languages, who dress themselves differently, who eat different kinds of food and yet their language of the mind is one and the same. If you leave the political sphere, all Indians live and think the Indian culture. Unlike in the UK where the House of Commons shall always start with a reading from the *Psalms* and the

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President of the US shall always be a Christian. According to Kapila Vatsyayan "Classical Indian architecture, sculpture, painting, literature (*kavya*), music, and dancing evolved their own rules conditioned by their respective media, but they share with one another not only the underlying spiritual beliefs of the Indian religious philosophic mind, but also the procedures by which the relationships of the symbols and the spiritual states were worked out in detail."

Thus without doubt one can say that the plurality in Indian poetics and its secular vision as compared to unipolar western thought still remains unmatched.

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## Art, Aesthetics and *Rasa*

AK Awasthi

A reflection on aesthetics as a word as well as discipline is only a little more than two hundred years old when Baumgarten appropriated the word 'aesthetics' to define 'taste' as a feeling of 'good' and 'bad'. His analysis, however, did include thoughts of ancient Greek philosophers who had always meant sensation to mean taste or 'sense of beauty'. The taste was defined as ability to judge according to the senses rather than according to the intellect.

### The Western Tradition:

Aesthetics is known as the philosophical study of beauty and taste. To define its subject matter more precisely is, however, a difficult task. As such, it could be said that self-definition has been the major concern of modern aesthetics. We are acquainted with an interesting realm of experience: the realm of the beautiful, the ugly, the sublime, and the elegant; of taste, criticism, and fine art; and of contemplation, sensuous enjoyment, and charm. In all these phenomena we believe that similar principles are operative and that similar interests are engaged. We also need to understand that beauty and taste do not belong to having only peripheral philosophical interest. In fact, they are the basis for evolving a philosophy of aesthetics.

No doubt, the 'sense of taste' has remained the basic point to determine the aesthetic judgement. The case of beauty in the Western tradition, however, is different from mere agreeableness to appeal. Aesthetics has been understood as sensory contemplation or appreciation of an object, whereas art refers to recognition, appreciation or criticism of a work of art. And art means a work of creative or applied nature, a piece of fine art, craft or anything that can be described as art - beautiful or ugly. The experience of beauty according to Hume goes beyond sensory experience and is linked to capacity for pleasure. For Kant such enjoyment of pleasure is acceptable, if only it leads to reflective contemplation, i.e. sensory, emotional and intellectual experiences - all at once, for the judgement of beauty combines all these in which other factors like social, political, moral, sexual, human will and desire are involved still the judgement cannot be empirical. For Croce or McLuhan any expression or counter environment is art. Tolstoy emphasised the value of empathy, so for him art lies on the experience of the audience or the creator; later the postmodernist philosophers like Jean Francois Lyotard also added the concept of sublime to the conception of beauty, but he was not the first to have done so. The concept of the sublime was first given by Longinus in reference to evaluation of poetry and Burke considered that 'sublime' could be one of the concepts to be employed in aesthetic evaluation. He introduced a famous distinction between two kinds of aesthetic judgment corresponding to two orders of aesthetic experience: the judgment of the beautiful and that of the sublime. The judgment of beauty has its origin in social feelings and the sublime has its origin in our feelings toward nature, and in our intimation of our ultimate solitude. The distinction between the sublime and the beautiful is now less frequently made than at the time of Burke and Kant. Nevertheless, it is undeniable that aesthetic judgment exists in many contrasting forms, of both praise and condemnation. A cursory glance into the history of aesthetics in the Western world will present further details.

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History of ideas tells us that any aesthetic conception or a philosophical inquiry into art or beauty in the West begins only with Plato, who considers beauty a combination with good and true; what is beautiful cannot be devoid of truth and goodness. Thomas Aquinas considered beauty as transcendental experience leading to truth and goodness having integrity, consonance and clarity.

For Baumgarten aesthetics is the scheme of sense experiences, a younger sister of logic; it gives most perfect kind of knowledge that sense experiences can have. It is further claimed that perfectness could be known or achieved by uniting the three ways-Beauty (senses), Truth (reason), and Good (moral will). Leo Tolstoy, however, claimed that good, truth and beauty, had nothing in common and may even oppose each other. Thus the philosophical debate was started around this new meaning of aesthetics and that led to the development of modern aesthetics mainly in the 17th century to the present day.

Immanuel Kant, who had earlier rejected Baumgarten's thesis as incapable of providing objective rules or principles of natural or artistic beauty, later conformed to Baumgarten's new usage and used the word to mean the judgement of taste or intuitive estimation of the beautiful. For Kant an aesthetic judgement is subjective and is related to the internal feeling of pleasure or displeasure. It is not related to any quality in the external objects. Hence, its incapability to provide objective rules was meaningful and irrelevant. According to Kant aesthetic experience of beauty is a judgement of subjective but universal truth. Since all agree that rose is beautiful so it is a fact. But Schiller beauty is the most perfect reconciliation of the sensual and rational parts of human nature.

For Hegel all culture is a matter of 'absolute spirit' coming to manifest itself step by step into which the absolute spirit is manifest to sense perception and is thus objective rather than subjective revelation of beauty. Schopenhauer's aesthetic contemplation of beauty is the most free that pure intellect can arise from the objects of will. Here we contemplate perfection of form in which the worldly agenda does not interfere, no utility question, no politics considered.

The British, however, were divided into two camps-intuitionists Bacon, Descartes, Hume Hogarth Burke and analytical. The intuitionists believed it to be a simple mental activity. But for Earl of Shaftesbury it was identical to moral sense- sensory version of moral goodness.

Towards the end of the 17th century in Britain taste, imagination, natural beauty and imitation came to be recognized as the central topics in aesthetics. The principal influences were the 3rd Earl of Shaftesbury and his disciples Francis Hutcheson and Joseph Addison. Shaftesbury was a follower of the philosopher John Locke (a naturalist who combined ethics and aesthetics as areas of philosophy). As a naturalist, he believed that the fundamental principles of morals and taste could be established by paying due attention to human nature, our sentiments are so ordered that certain things naturally please us and are naturally conducive to our good.

Taste is a kind of balanced discernment, whereby a person recognizes that, what is congenial to his sentiments and therefore an object of pleasurable contemplation. Shaftesbury laid much emphasis on the association of ideas as a fundamental component in aesthetic experience and the crucial bridge from the sphere of contemplation to the sphere of action.

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Francis Hutcheson was an empiricist who placed the problem of aesthetic judgement among the central questions of epistemology: How can we know that something is beautiful? What guides our judgment and what validates it? He believed that aesthetic judgments are perceptual and take their authority from a sense that is common to all who make them. Hutcheson in his book *An Inquiry into the Original of our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue* (1725, 46) explained: "The origin of our perceptions of beauty and harmony is justly called a 'sense' because it involves no intellectual element, no reflection on principles and causes."

Wittgenstein thought that aesthetics consisted in the description of a whole culture which is a linguistic impossibility-aesthetic experience lies beyond the language to describe. Then we have Hogarth, Burke, Coleridge, J S Mill, Spencer followed by postmoderns like Croce and others. Croce in his "Aesthetic of Science of Expression and General Linguistics or Aesthetic" (1902) distinguishes concept from intuition. Art to be understood first as expression and second as intuition. The distinction between presentation and expression is ultimately identical with that between concept and intuition. If aesthetic interests are peculiar, then they are really peculiarities of intuition: and this will also resolve the problem of form and content and give the meaning of the idea that the object of aesthetic interest is interesting for its own sake, it's not a means to an end.

Further development of thought witnessed Daniel Berlyne creating the field of experimental aesthetics in 1970 and Jean Francois Lyotard adhering to Kantian distinction between taste and sublime. New interdisciplinary connections were formed between aesthetics and information, aesthetics and ethics, applied aesthetics (fashion, mathematics, language, gastronomy), philosophy, physics mathematics and computer, symmetry and complexity. Now simplicity and cosmology are being considered a beauty, for beauty and truth have acquired synonymous gestation.

Overall from the outset a noticeable pattern of thought as well as problems is found emerging- two problems were encountered while advancing the theory:

1. What should a philosopher study in order to understand such ideas as beauty and taste?
2. What should be the point of view in using the word 'beautiful'?

With the passage of time the debate progressed and new dimensions were added to the nature and scope of aesthetics, which included three approaches to aesthetics-  
 i. the viewpoint of concepts or the analysis of the 'language of criticism',  
 ii. a philosophical study of certain states of mind- responses, attitudes emotions- are involved in aesthetic experience or aesthetic attitude, with reference to Hegel, Wittgenstein and

iii. the philosophical study of aesthetic objects because the world contains a special class of objects.

Incidentally the three approaches may have led to incompatible results or they may be in harmony. With the aesthetic object also arose the question of aesthetic experience and aesthetic experience which debated further the relationship between form and content, the role of imagination, emotion, response and enjoyment.



Thus, contemporary conceptual environment in the West became more complex, issue oriented, experimental and interdisciplinary- even interdependent. As of late, the emphasis is on to discover connection between psychology and aesthetics. For example in the appreciation of literature like Shakespeare's *Hamlet* we arrive at an ontological and value theory or conceptual art, that is to say we have to think about these aspects in order that the reader could discern truth as envisaged by the author. For the value represented by aesthetic evaluation Kant's viewpoint (on the sublime) seems to be most satisfying. He extracts the ultimate ground of his faith in a Supreme Being, and this is for him the most important value that aesthetic experience conveys.

Contemporary aesthetics has also been less disposed to discuss the idea of beauty than that of criticism. But clearly, the two ideas are so closely related that anything said about the one has a direct bearing on the other. The Western aesthetics starts with a study of the concepts and modes of argument employed in discussing beauty. It tries to grasp the distinctive problems of aesthetics through a study of the logical and ideological puzzles to which these concepts and arguments give rise. The third thing seems to distinguish between two domains- art as object and beauty as experience.

But it has to be borne in the mind that aesthetics is broader in scope than the philosophy of art, which comprises one of its branches. It deals not only with the nature and value of the arts but also with those responses to natural objects that find expression in the language of the beautiful and the ugly. However, terms such as beautiful and ugly seem too vague in their application and too subjective in their meaning to divide the world successfully into those things that do, and those that do not, exemplify them. Almost anything might be seen as beautiful or ugly by some people or from some point of view.

Development of thought in the West had been going on consistently up to the time of Kant and Schiller, who attached due significance to the concept of 'taste' (Rasika). Hegel turned the tide under the influence of German romantics and added new dimensions to aesthetics; he replaced taste by objects, attitudes and experiences. He regarded art as an activity of self-realization in which the spirit achieves its self-articulation as Idea. The analysis was followed by added significance being imparted to structure and content by structuralists and other linguists leading all into a bewildering argumentative mass of logic and expression regarding experience and taste, and giving rise to a number of short-lived opinions coming up now and then.

Contrary to such late multi-directional development in the West the Indian aesthetics evolved very early and very differently. It had its genesis in the socio-religious and philosophical basis of life of the Vedic times rather than in modern scientific thought. It emerged from the everyday experience distilling from holistic approach to life determined by the great antithesis of Subject and Object, Self and not-Self, Will and Matter, Unity and Diversity, Love and Hate, Birth and Death, *srishti* (creation) and *samhara* (destruction followed by transformation) and all other pairs of such opposites constituting the whole of sensational or existential experience.

It was in this reference when Europe was continuously glorifying its new found glory of the Renaissance wisdom and highlighting the advantages of individualism, thinking that Anand Coomaraswamy warned Europe not to let Asian idealism and least imperialism of wealth and of violence, with which Europe had armed herself,



turn back on the latter. Further Romain Rolland remarked that "The degradation of Asia will be the cause of your ruin. In her uplift lies your safety." The prophecy is even more relevant today than earlier.

The reason for such warning was that the West had long ago abandoned itself utterly to its search of individual and social happiness, maimed and disfigured life by the very frenzy of its haste and killed the happiness which it started to pursue. Today as also in the past Europeans cannot see beyond the boundaries of man's individual life or the life of his class, of his country or of his peculiar interest, he imprisons his will within the narrow poles to realize the highest human ideal.

**The Indian Tradition:** (based on Anand K Coomaraswamy's theory of aesthetics)

Contrary to this approach lies the Indian ideal of 'victory to the soul', where the matching of opposites produces the true rhythm of life where the spiritual purity goes along sensual joy but always joined by the highest wisdom as the concept of *Purushartha* is the part of social fabric. There is no negation. All similar or diverse is harmonized, everything has its place; everything has its function. All things blend into one-another and recreate a composite unity-the experience of the rhythm of life wherein we feel the beauty, peace and happiness of life. The rhythm of life is in evidence in a harmonious approach to religion, philosophy and constant application of abstract theory to practical life. Such being the approach to life any activity would be considered a skill and its appreciation the expression of the aesthetic.

Indian aesthetic conception presupposes a unified field of organic components-mind, body and soul. The art of concentration, visualization or the clear understanding of the psychology of the imagination are learnt from life and the artist after learning them conceives art as *yoga* as Valmiki does in the *Ramayana* and achieves 'self-identification' with the object of the work as well as the vividness of the image. What is known as universal and eternal in all art is the impassioned vision based on understanding, correlated with cloudless thought and devoid of sentimentality. Whenever such art is produced, it arouses the aesthetic emotion known as *Rasa*, the absolute beauty with which are identified the three absolutes- Beauty, Love and Truth-the embodiment of which can be no other but the Absolute Reality.

It follows then, poetry is a skill, which exhibits such approach; it allows us to feel the rhythm of life wherein we feel the beauty and harmony of life by an essential element called *rasa*. This may be explored further. *Rasa* has been translated into English as aesthetic emotion though literally it means juice, which promises a taste and it does not appear carrying a sense of beauty. But going by the Indian socio-cultural and religio-philosophical convention taste includes all elements of beauty.

### The essential element in poetry:

The Indian classical tradition holds *Rasa* as the essential element in poetry and which is felt only through its derivatives- *rasavant* (having *rasa*), *rasika* (enjoyer, lover), *rasasvadan* (tasting *rasa*). It is too difficult to know *rasa* as an object or as it is in itself. The question arises: where is the seat of *rasa*? The answer is that it is felt as a result in the spectator though it is not caused by physical stimulants or states - determinants, consequents, moods, involuntary emotions and sublimated feeling (*vibhav*, *anubhav*, *bhav*, *sancaribhav*, *sattvabhav*). It is an aesthetic experience, that is above moral purpose - good and evil combine- and enjoyed only by the competent to do so; there is no



element of instruction in it; it is beyond any mundane conception. Vishwanatha as well as Croce is of the opinion that even a serious student of poetry may not experience illumination of spirit but it could be felt by those who have the right perception as is true in the case of Tagore, who rides over the wings of imagination and by deploying the force of his feeling he perfects his song. Sukracarya, an ancient Indian sage defines 'right perception' as a quality by which 'the defects of images are destroyed by the power of virtue of a worshipper whose heart is set on God'. Similarly according to the *Gita* 'if art declines any time, it implies decline of faith and love which are essential components of dharma of man' (*yada yada hi dharmasya...* (SrimadBhagwadgita. 4: 7-8). It implies then, wherever faith and love abound, right perception follows and the stage is set for experiencing the illumination of spirit.

### Moment and space (seat) of *rasa* :

As *rasa* - the vision of beauty - is an experience, it has to occur somewhere and some one must also feel it some time. But it is found neither in the poem, nor in the poet, nor in the images, nor can it be even aimed at; it is rather discovered in the permanent motif, which is energized by *rasika's* own capacity-sublime imaginative faculty, the source of supreme delight, which reveals deeper significance than that of the literary sense. In minor poetry it is the play of sense and in inferior poetry, it is ornamentation that are known as respective qualities. It is for this reason that descriptive or narrative poetry hardly touches precincts of *rasa*. Coomaraswamy quotes from *Sahitya Darpa* (Vishvanatha), "It is pure, indivisible, self-manifested, compounded equally of joy and consciousness, free of admixture with any other perception, the very twin brother of mystic experience (*Brahmasvadana Sahodarah*), and the very life of it is supersensuous (*lokottara*) wonder (admiration/ enjoyment). Further, it is enjoyed by those who are competent thereto in identity, just as the form of God is itself the joy with which it is recognized." (*The Dance of Shiva...* 58) It cannot be an object of knowledge since its perception is indivisible from its very existence; it is supersensuous, hyperphysical (*alaukika*). And experience is the only proof of its reality. Here religion, art and philosophy stand for the one and the same experience - 'an intuition of reality and identity'. A similar view is also held by Kant, Goethe, Blake, Schopenhauer, Schiller etc.

Such view cannot be a byproduct of any ordinary life but it is the essence of life that is eternal, not an eternity in time but whose recognition is here and now of all things in the self and the self in all things. This is inseparable unity of the material and the spiritual world - the foundation of Indian culture, which is the whole character of the social ideals. As such Indians have a theoretical basis - a consistent theory of meaning and purpose of life. In course of development of Indian society Brahmins are supposed to have created a social order based on *dharma*. The Buddhists, however, did not emphasize the social order but stressed upon creating a sentiment to overcome the present woes, i.e. promote friendliness so that all contribute to peace and happiness. There would be no conquests or killing of animals but efforts should be made to create an awareness to build hospitals, plant trees and do hard work. The Brahmins represented 'will to power' whereas the Buddhist 'will to survive'. This apparent conflict between the two ideals was also resolved by the Brahmin by giving the ultimate solution that 'will to power' will manage all. Power can achieve all, once power as per *dharma* is achieved; problem of survival is automatically solved. Further *Arthasashtra* and *Dharmasashtra* (of Manu) contributed immensely in making religious philosophy the intelligible basis of culture.

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In fact, the Brahman view of life is centred round the science of self, called *adhyatma vidya*, which is religion as well as philosophy of India. As science recognizes unity of all life- one source, one essence, and one goal- so does Indian sensibility regard the realization of this unity as the highest good, the bliss, salvation, freedom and the final purpose of life. This is how Indian conception aims at eternal life and not eternity in time. Such view can emanate from holistic approach and pattern of life rather than the individualistic, fragmented and specific life as represented by the Western society. Life functions as a curve containing diversity, sin, selfishness or evil. To resolve the ensuing conflict or impasse the Brahmin prescribed INVOLUTION (the path of return, *nivritti*, self-realization) or inward movement of life. Opposed to this is EVOLUTION (the path of pursuit, *pravritti*, self-assertion) or outward movement. Those who follow evolution follow religion of time but those who follow involution follow eternal religion (*sanatana dharma*) which prescribes a way of life, resolves, accommodates or explains conflicts and complexities and leads to contentment. Life is one whole and self-realization is the essential purpose.

Explicating this approach the Indian sages further explained that experience of life is either good or evil. Indians term it as knowledge (*vidya*) or ignorance (*avidya*) and divide all actions into three categories- *sattva* (leading to sublime feel, state of knowledge), *rajas* (leading to fulfillment of desires, self-assertion), *tamas* (passion centric action likely leading to sin). When knowledge increases, self-assertion decreases; self-assertion is not sin though it is a hurdle to knowledge. The goal of knowledge is self-realization. Suppression is not self-realization, for the latter leads to pestilence rather than knowledge. Gratification of the senses is a requirement for those who wish to seek. Those not seeking gratification, implies that they are moving inward as per four stations of life (*purushartha catustaya*- *artha* (wealth), *kama* (pleasure derived from sense), *dharma* (according to law, rule, ethical practice), *moksha* (salvation)). First three are desire based and no society has moved beyond these, only Indians could go beyond the domain of desires and added a sublime ideal as the ultimate goal in order to attain the holistic vision of life. This was no ordinary job, which was accomplished after centuries of reflection, introspection, meditation and argument. As it is, any approach that evolves from such a vastly rich heritage, has to have all the strength, accuracy and propriety, so that it can formulate a faultless method of evaluation and judgement. A life lived in such way would automatically lead to a state of experience, not an object, a self-realised knowledge or sublime feeling.

Thus *rasa* is a state, which cannot be known objectively because it cannot be an object of knowledge, its perception is existence itself giving super sensuous wonder; it is represented by the eternal symbol and sound *aum* (OM), which means all in one, all as one and one as all comprising Brahman (the eternal) and *sahodara* (twin), *lokottar anand* (supreme bliss beyond the mundane world) symbolized by bhog (enjoyment) of *naad* (celestial feel of the primeval sound of creation). It implies, therefore that *Rasa* is an experience- an experience of Reality, Absolute, Truth or Beauty.

Plato uses a Greek word *kalos* (*kalokagathia*) in *Dialogues* meaning 'good handsome and brave' and defines "Everyone chooses his love out of the objects of beauty according to his own taste." (quoted by A K Coomaraswamy in *The Dance of Shiva*) Plato considers beauty as a Form (idea), that is eternal, changeless, supremely real, and independent of ordinary objects, which has its permanent properties belonging to all beautiful objects, whether somebody admires them or not. Plato seems to admit relativity of taste as well as absolute nature of beauty, which goes well with his conception of ethics or



as expressed in *the Republic* except in relation to art. Indian tradition regards low form. view of entang

### Principles of evaluation and aesthetic judgement:

In Indian aesthetic tradition religion and art are only two names of the same experience; religion is intuition of reality (religion prescribes a way of life which is based on the perception of reality) and art is identity of reality. It implies that wherever there is pure form, i.e. without associations, as love is to lover, truth to philosopher, beauty to artist, it is the same experience of reality with the artist. Most artists and thinkers like Goethe, Blake, Schopenhauer, Schiller, Croce would endorse this viewpoint. The experience of reality covers all the three aspects, viz, beauty can't be known objectively, wherever the mind attaches itself to objects of choice, there it perceives the Absolute, the two worlds of spirit and matter are one not two. The artist does not aim to create beauty, nor can he succeed in doing so but he creates beauty when his mind attaches itself to an object of choice and devotion. Neither effort nor renunciation helps him to achieve this aim.

Such being the nature of Reality, Absolute, Truth or Beauty, the Indian classical tradition holds that Absolute Beauty exists as absolute goodness or truth. They believe that it's an experience of HIM, who is perfect beauty, love or truth. But, in fact, it is the *rasik*, whether in relation to art or metaphysics or theology or any other field of life, who guides us to what is *rasvant*. The *rasik* is a critic or *Guru* (teacher) or connoisseur who alone is capable of explaining *rasonuman*, *rasaswahan*, *rasodgam*, *rasanubhava*, *rasvant* and *rasvihar* (inference of, invocation of, genesis of, feeling of, overpowering of, blessed enjoyment of *rasa* (the aesthetic emotion or emotive bliss respectively)). The *rasika* is one who possesses the holistic conception of Faith, Love and the Supreme Being, i.e. faith in the humanistic principles, unflinching belief in the eternal nature, order or omnipresent intelligence and love at heart for all- animate or inanimate, which is or will be. He is an inborn *rasonmukh* (gifted with instinctive sublime feel), but this faculty lies in the unconscious state till the conscious search for that, which will satisfy him, suddenly begins and he quivers under an exquisite experience of arousal, an altogether new experience which none else has enjoyed before. He recreates and imagines the *rasa* process as a forceful stream outpouring and understands the causative emotive factors, that rise in him for the time being enabling him to attain the instinctive feel (even) for a short time. Such is the spell and span of the process that it enlarges and widens the scope of the central idea. Though *rasa* is a state, yet it is not attainable by effort as it can't be felt objectively; it is to be as *rasavant*.

In common parlance we use the word 'beautiful' when we talk of skill, charm, congeniality, approval or objects like girl, weather, dance, garments, clothes, nature, poem, painting, etc. But we make the aesthetic use of the term while referring to noble actions, lovely posture, aesthetic judgement, brilliant colour, graceful gesture, etc. It is to make a material description of feelings. In strict sense this is a sympathetic ethical consideration to judge the object of appreciation. Such are the peculiar ways of the artist. If we have to search for beauty it is not to be found in the work of art, rather it is in the craving, overpowering intensity- the necessity that has been felt of representing the subject, of which *the Ramayan* and *the Mahabharata* are ideal examples. Beauty is an idea, whose property is spatial not material, though reflected or represented in material forms, yet it may only be conceptualized or imagined but never gained as a form, similarly as taste of any thing can be enjoyed and described but not captured as



# Art, Aesthetics and Rasa

form. It is the business of the *rasavant* who defines the work of art as good or bad in view of aesthetic quality for he alone understands how material and subject are entangled in relativity. So the *rasika* defines:

1. what is the aesthetic intuition on the part of the original artist;
2. the state of internal expression of the same- creation and vision of beauty;
3. indication of the same by external means- activity and communication;
4. resulting stimulation of the *rasika* to the reproduction of the original intuition and which become the basis of evaluation and judgement.

The source of original intuition is most crucial in terms of *rasa* or aesthetic judgement. *Rasa* may also be translated as 'emotive blessedness' which appears closer to modern aesthetic terminology. Every artist discovers beauty, which exists everywhere, therefore beauty can be discovered anywhere but not in the distinctive forms of ugly and beautiful because beauty is not bound with forms; that beauty lies in the beholder's eyes, is a common man's adage. It can be discovered in the recreation of the artist's mind because *Rasika* alone can enter the poet's mind for beauty does not exist apart from the artist.

Above all what we know as self-driven, automatic or beyond instinctive reflexes, in *apne aap hota hai* which has no external cause but a combined -cause and effect-field activity, complete in itself, is the cue or central to the *Rasika*, which enables him to see what others can never do. He gets the taste of it which lasts for ever; it is not like tasting perishable (material) thing in which, though the memory of taste remains, the taste itself cannot be retained so that the taste cannot be enjoyed perennially.

The features that lead to determine the beauty of an object are such as can be examples of perfectness, harmonized effect and truly identified spirit. The *Rasika* looks for correspondence between theme and expression, content and form, space and time as two entities but identified as one. When there is less correspondence, the object may be termed as 'not truly beautiful' but this cannot be the basis of aesthetic judgement, because on the one hand beauty has no degrees; nothing can be called more or less beautiful and on the other aesthetic judgement requires spontaneous appeal as well as 'non externality'. It is not a pursuit but an experience. Art created by the poet does not exist outside his self but in the self itself, which he expresses as far as possible in external ways, for expression means 'to bring out', therefore any kind of expression itself is an externality.

The quality of spontaneity is such as is found in a '*bhakta*' (devotee), who does not attempt any thing; he has no objective to attain; he lives a state of grace, which is not conscious or deliberate. Therefore the art that is expressed by artist/ poet lies only in his 'state of forgetfulness' as all art lies in self-forgetfulness. Unlike hedonists' belief art is not a pursuit of pleasure or happiness because in pursuit lies bondage to loveliness, whereas the artist enjoys freedom when he realizes BEAUTY.

Poetry, dance, drama, etc are external signs of art; those are forms and a constant reminders that they arouse aesthetic emotion but in themselves they are neither art nor beauty. As they are only forms, art is reflected in the content expressed through them. The significance of form lies in the sense that it exhibits the inner relationship of things - the rhythm of spirit in the gesture of living things. Such forms should not be confused with language, meaning, and moral uplift. In fact, they are phenomena in



themselves independent of any external symbol or medium. The rhythm of spirit exemplified by them possesses perfect communicability without using external medium. The rhythm of spirit is an ever evolving state of experience. As it is with a prosperous mother, who undergoes physical pain and other inconveniences, inabilities, and is excited at the imagination of the child, attains greatest level of contentment at delivery of the child, lives in real joy at glorious achievement of becoming a mother, then is created the rhythm of the spirit of motherhood through ever evolving happiness being discovered in the activities of the growing child. All the conditions are in tune with overall happiness, which is accepted as one perfect experience.

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# Reflections on Indian Strategic Perspective Towards the Theory of Post Modernism in Critical Discourse : A Meta-Analysis

Sankirtan Badhei

## I

### Introduction

Postmodernism has spread over the entire western modes of literary representations and interpretations, and beyond (Featherstone 2007, 1-12; Connor 2004, 62; Nicholson and Seidman 1999, 1-37). The long stretch pervades not only in its present condition but is going deep into the history. Perhaps, not a single text is there, which is not seen in the light of postmodernist agenda. Therefore, the theory of postmodernism, in recent years, has attracted the attention of an increasing number of global researchers (Featherstone 2007, 1-2; Arac 1997, 261-63). While much research on postmodernism focuses on the act of postmodernism per se, little attention has been paid to the issue of Indian critical discourse and its readiness to accept or reject postmodernism.

Many of our Indian critics easily accept the western construction and feel enriching without much interrogation( Kapoor 2001, 1-2; Paranjape 2009a, xiii and 2009b, 81-82). Therefore, diversified interpretations may be seen in Kapil Kapoor, Meenakshi Mukherjee, Harish Trivedi, Rajeswari Sunderajan, Vinay Lal, Meera Nanda, Gurpreet Mahajan, Avadesh Kumar Singh, Makarand Paranjape, Asish Nandi, Malashri Lal, Sumanyu Satpathy, and Manju Jain etc. But, as a lively part of the Indian tradition, owing much to Shankara, Panini, Patanjali, Kalidas, and Anandavardhan etc. we undergo to create a definitive space, with innovation of our own tradition by providing critical commentary to an emergent tradition.

Postmodernism appears in many forms to many people. Meera Nanda used it as an academic weapon and criticized Indian nationalism and Hindu rise (Nanda: Conference Paper, Sweden, 1-10); Vinay Lal in defense saw Vedic Mathematics as possibility ( Lal 2005, 12); grassroot postmodernism came up (Esteva and Prakash 1998, 1-13); critics tried to make its connection with Gandhism and Ambedkarism (Siddharth Shome:weblog 2007), connection with science and religion (Pickering 1995, 23-38), connection with feminism ( Nicholson and Seidman 1999, 39-86); Pei Yong in China called for reshaping postmodernism in Chinese way (Yong 2005, 1-19); critics began to ask questions on the universality of postmodernism (Bertens ed 1997, 1-2); and critics talked about global and local postmodernism ( Hassan 2001, 1-10), radical, eclectic and eco-libertarian postmodernism (Rasi 2008, 5). In such a time, I would like to address Indian strategic perspective towards postmodern theory and select few view points from Indian, Chinese and Japanese critical discourse for discussion. However, my focus on Indian discourse will be only of those who are significantly thinking from Indian tradition perspective.

## II

I have formulated ideas from three Indian, one Chinese, and one Japanese critic. However, two categories of critics with Indian perspectives make the paper a coherent whole. One used the postmodern theory, and the other resisted, rejected or reshaped it. Those who used it and are engaged themselves in academic exercise; I have excluded them here because I do respect their slender academic engagement and busy schedule.

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However, even by their exclusion or invisibility they make their definite presence. On the other hand, the following are the authoritative critics those who stand for a new innovative structure or theory building initiative from Indian, Chinese and Japanese literary or extra literary point of view. Let me capture and expound their points in new light.

### III

#### Avadesh Kumar Singh: Rejecting or Not Rejecting Postmodernism

Postmodernism in India receives a serious resistance from Avadesh Kumar Singh, one of the eminent critics in India (WPPI 2001). For him, 'ism' is temporary and 'post' which has made a mark in critical arena. Like others, he also called the subscribers of postmodernism as 'po-mo' and 'po-co' generation and disdains the uncritical reception in the so called postcolonial Third world. For him, postmodernism is perhaps, a product of west's understanding on man and world in terms of metaphysical discourse of the ancient world, theological discourse of the medieval world, and the scientific positivistic view of man(1). But, through a process of cultural disintegration, the West has lost the understanding about man and nature. It has lost the purpose of life by celebrating uncertainty, and confusion(1-2).

Singh says, India is a consumer of western postmodernism without going through the stages of western revolution(2). Our celebration of modernism is also an imposition of reality to serve the colonial interest of the west. We have not reached to a point where modernism and postmodernism because we have not passed through a certain socio-political order that foregrounds the perception of 'ism'(2). He is critical about Sudesh Pachouri, Ajit Thakore, and E.V. Ramakrishnan for their unquestionable acceptance of western modes of postmodernism who are trying to fit it into their models of representations. (Singh: WPPI, 2). They should resist the alien 'ism' and 'post' and he deplores our postcolonial condition being in wrong direction. But he has praised Nambar Singh (2) who has resisted and questioned postmodernism in his critical literary representation.

Singh observes:

Neocapitalist forces accompanied by the philosophy of postmodernism, culture of neo-consumerism operate in ways subtler than ever before facilitating replacement of visible capitalist colonialism with neocolonialism. Colonialism was like a mountain but neocolonialism is an iceberg whose tip only is visible; that too to a few. It deceives the best of our perceiving reputations making the task of our writers and critics more difficult and complex. It can not be ignored or rejected. It can be understood, gnawed at, and resisted. (Writing Postmodernism and Post-colonialism in India, 4)

Postmodernism has become way of life engrossing in our culture by default. We can not escape from it. Therefore, in a society like India, Singh has given a five fold strategy and counter strategic alternatives to follow: (1) We can reject it and without taking note of it, we can allow it to thrive it around us and get throttled in the process (2) We can accept its currency and supremacy, and surrender ourselves to it. (3) We can celebrate it and commit intellectual and cultural suicide. (4) We can receive it proactively-understand it, resist it, and whatever is negative in it. (5) We can think alternatives to it and redefine it or re/construct our theory or model from our texts (WPPI, 5).



Singh proposes *deshivad* (WPPI, 5-7 & 10) being multicentred, descriptive and real concept in opposition to artificial internationalism and foregrounds it as a strategy to counter intellectual invasion of alien homogenizing forces. He cites that, in sixteenth century England, there was a balancing of native tradition with alien tradition where Shakespeare had even resisted and assimilated the systematic foreign modes (8). Similarly, in America, philosopher and artists redefined western concepts and saw a new American Dream (8). Therefore, the past tradition must not be discarded altogether as a 'useless lump' (8) and we must have a revival of it. But, Singh sometimes see danger in revivalism because it leads to fanaticism with extremism and beyond control (8-10). However, we have to be careful about it. *Deshivad* also needs real introspection and must be redefined.

### Commentary

Postmodernism is a complex and invisible form of neocolonialism. We can not ignore it but we need to resist. Singh's idea of resistance is total war against consumerist culture. His comparison of 'colonialism with mountain' and 'neocolonialism with tip of iceberg' is an intelligent understanding. It seems, Singh sees many negatives in colonial encounters and is particularly critical about the hidden agenda of neocolonialism.

Why does Singh see postmodernism in terms of 'post' and ignore its 'ism' aspect? Perhaps, it is the post which makes its undue presence in other's space and subverts the beliefs and values. But, there is no escape from this 'post'. Therefore, he provides few strategies and counter-strategies - to reject it, resist it and redefine it. This is a systematic understanding about an alien theory. But, Singh could not point out any positive aspect of postmodernism as Paranjape did it in limited context (see Paranjape: PI:SPA; [www.Makarand.com](http://www.Makarand.com)).

Singh's idea of *deshivad* can counter postmodernism as Kapoor sees 'theories must resist theory' (Kapoor EOSLT: A Rejoinder 2001, 29). But, he is careful by insisting to go for a redefining process of *deshivad* because this revival process leads to extreme and undue fanaticism. How will this redefining process take place? Invoking native tradition, Singh is trying to formulate a dream- a kind of American Dream and particularly, we must welcome his suggestion on resisting foreign theory and then assimilating the foreign modes for a new progress. But, it needs a systematic and careful innovation on Indian intellectual tradition to go for any assimilation or integrative process.

## IV

### Makarand Paranjape: Towards A New Theory

As a responsible citizen, cultural production and reproduction for survival, and empowerment in India has been a real issue for Makarand Paranjape (Paranjape, 2009 a.1 & xii) He questions our low self-esteem and the enslaved state as defective colonial training. He also attempts to *situate* our texts, our individual position and our tradition ((Paranjape 2009 a, 29-31; and Paranjape, 2009 b, 1-2) and vehemently tells us that we don't deserve a choice- to accept or not to accept postmodernism.

Paranjape does not see postmodernism as conspiracy but an outcome of a novelty within the West intellectual discourse as a commodity. It is like an automobile or electronic gadget in advanced capitalist, post-industrial society. New verbal fashion



like this is inaugurated every ten years and the entire language-system itself becomes a thing of the past. Moreover, the agenda is that, the logic of consumerism in a capitalist society demands a continuous substitution and redefinition of the old in terms of the new (*Postmodernism and India: Some Preliminary Animadversions*, [www.Markarand.com](http://www.Markarand.com)).

For Paranjape, postmodernism is Eurocentric, elitist and closed to outsiders, and is deeply a question of power. It represents the hegemony of the West. In India, abuse of power is refracted, distorted, and reproduced under the odd logic of colonialism. Those who are closest to the West, those with Western degrees, books and articles published in the West, and whose work has been recognized in the West are in control (*PI:SPA*, [www.Makarand.com](http://www.Makarand.com)).

### Indo-centric Approach

Paranjape rethinks postmodernism from an Indian perspective and Indo-centric approach. Postmodernism as the subaltern's advantage is an imposed reality, says, we have, 'again', greeted with readiness our "master's discarded and so underwear" (*PI:SPA*, [www.Makarand.com](http://www.Makarand.com)).

For him, we have to explore modernity (and postmodernity) from our own local and tradition. We need to write a coherent history of ourselves. We should have rereading with freshness of our great mystics and great texts to recover vitality and emancipatory power. The Constitution of India needs to be reread to facilitate greater autonomy and federalism.

In India, we have been a divided category, being regionalist, the nationalist and internationalist. The regionalist dumps the idea of the nation and identifies with some special interest group, regional, linguistic, religious, casteist, gender-based and thereby without a break, attacks the ideology of nationalism as being hegemonic and oppressive. In fact, all these categories are overlapping and inter-connected. Similar situation is with traditionalist, modernist and postmodernist. These categories also combine with the previous categories (*PI:SPA*). Therefore, we should resolve our multi-dimensional and contradictory categories.

### Positive Aspect of Postmodernism

We can use postmodernism as the desire and urge for more freedom, as dismantling of oppressive structures, hence as gradual and opening up of systems and ideologies. We can usher in *glasnost* and *perestroika* like concept into our political and ideological institutions. Therefore, we can accept that, there is the relevance of postmodernism to the poorer people in particular. But, postmodernism does not necessarily have any automatic and inbuilt safeguards against the very oppressive that it purports to overthrow (*PI:SPA*).

For Paranjape, if reading Derrida and Foucault can enlighten our urban intellectual perhaps, he would be happy. But, for him, liberation is more important than the means of liberation because clinging to the means of liberation lies in slavery. Therefore, we need a total decolonization and a different discourse, one that we can handle and control and which may overlap with the dominant Eurocentric discourse but is not entirely contained by it. For this, we should radically question received dogmas from both our own traditions and the West simultaneously to arrive at a new position (*PI:SPA*).



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### Do We Need Theory?

In the West, there is disjunction between precept and practice. But, in India there is no such contradiction. Again, in London or Los Angeles a Derrida, a Lyotard, a Habermas, a Jameson, or even a Chakravorty as theorists attract a larger audience than any poet. "Why shouldn't this phenomenon urge us to produce our own theory rather than importing it wholesale from the West?" says Paranjape.

He believes that, the whole idea of structures implies disciplinary and theoretical foundations which are already Western. Therefore, he can not provide an alternative structure for India except *nativism* or *Indianism* with narrow perspective, with no choice. However, he adds:

All the cultural tools that we have inherited from our tradition, no matter how blunt and rusted some of them might have become, we need to sharpen them against an imported grindstone and then use them to chip, crack, and break down the very edifice of the West which we find oppressive. (*Postmodernism and India: Some Preliminary Animadversions*, [www.Makarand.com](http://www.Makarand.com))

But, Paranjape in later period, and after a long deliberation persuades us to think about 'Svaraj', as an altered destination, as a decolonization project (*AD:SSNI*, 29 & 174).

### Commentary

The entire idea of postmodernism is a product of consumerist culture in disguise. Therefore, it offers little power to the poor to deconstruct. If Paranjape talks about the positive aspect of postmodernism, that is only for short term gain for the oppressed but, it opens up freedom from the oppressive picture/ideology.

Paranjape can not provide a structure for the Indian, as this structure has already been provided by the West. We must rediscover our structure. If we don't have anything, we have to create something from that nothing. But, I believe, we have 'something' as Paranjape tells us that, that something is blunt and rusted. However, the idea of *Svaraj* is in right Indian perspective.

The contemporary world is realistic one and the writers from India and West are selling exotic Indian materials outside. They are even selling those materials to us! They are defining our idea, our way of living, our economy, our society, our culture and our total existential and metaphysical worldview from an imposed perspective. This is because those who ought to define Indian position they are not serious or if serious, lack fellow support. Why do we lack this support? Is it because we are not correcting our own little dogma and loosing larger support? Therefore, Paranjape has rightly said, "we should radically question received dogmas from both our own traditions and the West simultaneously to arrive our position" (*PI:SPA*, [www.Makarand.com](http://www.Makarand.com)).

We need to reconcile our interest as regionalist, nationalist and internationalist. Again, within our tradition there are contradictions but what kind of contradiction? Does it have a relationship with oneness principle or structure? My point is, we are even today not clear what kind of totality we are in (or our subject position is). Therefore, we engage in self pity. We need rigorous research on totality, unity, oneness from our traditional texts to better understand us. Therefore, Paranjape is looking for an 'exact' theory which can nourish all human kind. But, I suggest, our theory should come out

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from our own Indian knowledge system correcting our past with new innovation international perspective.

## V

### Kapil Kapoor : Is Indian Theory Making Possible and Do-able?

Being a well-known linguistic philosopher in India, and having great knowledge and authority on Indian tradition, Kapil Kapoor's recognition on Indian cognitive system, time and again, comes into view in numerous texts. Particularly, he is involved with 'what' aspect and then only 'why' as per Indian tradition. He is not in favour of subverting the text and is a vehement critic of recontextualization process which subverts the author's point. He calls for building theory from Indian knowledge system and is perhaps, experimenting with new theory for long time as a part of his contribution, making himself busy like Derrida and others.

Kapoor says:

All the major European minds of the nineteenth century -Humboldt, Fichte, Hegel, Goethe, Schopenhauer, Kant, Nietzsche, Schiller, Schelling, de Saussure, Roman Jakobson, Trubetzkoy, were either Sanskritics or on their own admission, had been deeply involved in Indian thought. Their work has inspired various thought movements-Idealism, Romanticism which have shaped the contemporary mind. For example, Structuralism, which owes so much to the work of de Saussure who was the Professor/teacher of Sanskrit at Geneva before he came over to Sorbonne, is the underpinning of what are today virtually global thought movements right up to Post-Modernism. (*Loss, Recovery and Renewal of Texts in India's Tradition*, 1).

The above statements make it evident that, an Indian theory making is possible and do-able. But, it needs the systematic and rigorous rereading of Indian tradition (LLL 1994, 11-18).

#### Making Knowledge and Interpretation Relevant

Reconstructed Indian knowledge and thought has influenced and shaped modern contemporary thinking. For Kapoor, the process of reconstruction and renewal of Indian knowledge began in Europe in 18th century and if I say, it is still going on today. He says, "The reconstruction and dissemination of the classical Indian texts in Sanskrit, Pali, and Prakrit in the world is a successful global effort (*viswa yajña*) to maintain and sustain the heritage of mankind"(LRRTIT, 1). In India, through internal (change in language over time) and external influence (war or invasion, natural calamities), Indian knowledge system became esoteric and dried up. Indian knowledge disappeared, got fragmented and dispersed or became opaque as the tradition of continuity of learning suspended. Therefore, we need to recover these ideas by virtue of redaction, adaptation, translation, commentary, popular exposition and recreation (1 & 5).

For Kapoor, when an 'asymmetrical text' (LRRTIT, 4) grows with what it seeks to explain, it loses its relevance and position. This statement could be relevant to postmodern texts of today, which may not survive.

As we need to make knowledge system relevant, so also the interpretation of knowledge. Kapoor disputes some western scholars and their Indian followers their 'meta- reading: as they talk about the text and ask 'why' before they ascertain 'what' (23). This reading's purpose undermines the traditional reverence for the



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Also, these scholars select parts and portions of texts and make original claims by applying to those parts of text questionable methods of interpretation. Kapoor finds attitudinal difference also in these modes of scholarship (24). There is subversion of beliefs and values with false claim of originality and that takes precedence over total, unbiased interpretation of the text. In addition, meaning becomes the instrument for some given social or political purpose (LRRTIT, 24). This is why postmodern interpretation is irrelevant. Therefore, Kapoor says:

...it is imperative that Indian scholars should revert to and cultivate the traditional *shastra paddhati*, the method of interpreting the text. The methods of traditional scholarship should be replicated and the traditional institutions and scholars must be given total state patronage. Only that will maintain and renew and keep relevant India's intellectual traditions and texts (*Loss, Recovery and Renewal of Texts in India's Tradition*, 24).

### Experiment with New Theory

The educated Indian is speaking with vocabulary of the west. For Kapoor, 'West is the theory and India is the data'. What a great scholarly subordination, (EOSLT : A Rejoinder 2001, 1)! This 'de-intellectualization' needs to be corrected by re-locating the Indian mind in the Indian thought (2). Therefore, Sanskrit literary theory could be suitable theory for Indian literary criticism as a part of this big endeavour. But, the rise of lingua franca in opposition to Sanskrit or English may be right explosion with regional political acts but mentally underprivileged (EOSLT: A Rejoinder 2001, 29).

We have become passive, uncritical recipients of Western theories and models (EOSLT : A Rejoinder 2011, 2). We have abandoned the Sanskrit tradition. Kapoor does not see any reconciliation with western theories and provides alternative to Eurocentrism (LLL 1994, 11-18). He is uncomfortable with global English language and its hyper-canonical texts. He sees that, theories need to resist theory. Therefore, he wants to relocate the growth of the Indian knowledge system in non-metropolitan city as Indian theoretical constructs (EOSLT : A Rejoinder 2011, 29).

Kapoor observes:

We should expound meticulously the different Indian theories by writing commentaries on them. We should develop applicational models from different theories. We should promote application of these models to a wide variety of Indian and western texts, an exercise that will in the process refine the models and may also extend the theory (EOSLT: A Rejoinder 2001, 32-34).

For Kapoor, philosophy must enter into literary studies and the primary texts of Indian philosophy should be made simple with plain introduction and it is we who should engage the question whether India is one cultural entity or not and discuss this not just in the context of Western political cultural parameters but also, and mainly, in terms of our own attested thinking in this regard (33). We have to reargue the validity and relevance of the principle of transcendence for Indian multiple reality (33). Therefore, there shall be a rigorous research on the Great Indian Tradition.

### Commentary

Kapoor's Indian cognitive system with 'what' as an intelligence of the valuable and relevant (right) perception makes our knowledge meaningful. When we are having the intelligence to understand, it is a great knowledge. The capacity to cognize is with us and this must be inherited to the subsequent generation and here we see

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discontinuity due to external influences and internal reluctance due to various interests. Therefore, how to reconcile these interests that shall be our strategy.

India is a place of knowledge since time immemorial and why are we discarding our own system and are getting familiar with a system which is strange to us? This perhaps, we lack 'why' aspect of cognition or we are not developing this 'why' aspect of our own'. Why postmodernism is gaining ground in India? It is not so much because our westernized intellectuals using it for their own interest but because we have not taught them, from the very beginning, 'why' aspect of cognitive science.

Many European thinkers of 19th century have taken insights from our texts and have built a system of their own. This gives us strength that, we need to build a system of our own which has been discontinued for long time due to many reasons. We must look for our great foundation where we have lost, and I am sure, Kapoor sees it both in Buddhist philosophy and Indian Sanskrit tradition.

## VI

### Pei Yong: Significance of Constructive Postmodernism for China

The great discourse of Pei Yong signifying postmodernism in Chinese way of life seeks a Chinese success in 21st century. Quoting Kenichi Ohmae, the Japanese management guru, he further adds "... if one seeks a success, China must be considered and it can never be neglected. This is the same for the postmodern movement that we are considering" "(Why China? The Significance of China to the Postmodern Movement 2005, 2)."

Yong sees, China to become the centre of the study of process thought within 50 years. Therefore, China must either develop in line with Whiteheadianism or principles with the connotation of Whiteheadianism. It would creatively tailor its traditional culture which is similar to Whiteheadianism, into a constructive form of postmodern thought and manage to realize postmodernization in this fashion. Thus, it being the century of White head, the 21st century will also belong to China (Why China?, 1-2).

China compares itself with US but it stands on a complex of pre-modern, modern and postmodern without a complete modernity unlike US. It wants to have a jump to postmodernism without touching the defects of postmodernism. Therefore, some intellectuals who have been connected with constructive postmodernism call for direct access to postmodern society through a leap across typical western modernism, to avoid the disastrous track of Western modern development. But, there are also intellectuals who think contrary to it (Why China?, 3).

Yong believes, spiritual resources of the Chinese tradition can contribute to the postmodern movement (Why China? 4). Confucianism - Taoism - Buddhism combined can add to constructive postmodernism through integration. Post-modernization of religion should be made with harmony.

He says, "Chinese traditional culture and religion actually have many conceptual elements that qualify as profoundly 'postmodern', thus present endless spiritual nutrition and thought treasure for postmodernism" (Why China?, 4). He further adds, "process philosophy, constructive postmodernism, and Chinese traditional culture have many links" (Why China?, 4).



Yong says:

When paying attention to postmodern factors in Chinese traditional culture, we are not about to go back to the simple past. Instead, we should attempt to enrich and expand resources of postmodern thought by innovative exploration and interpretation... Chinese traditional ideas are attractive to constructive postmodernism, but we should not simply go back to them. They should be updated by conscientiously respecting science and social innovations (Why China? The Significance of China to the Postmodern Movement, \*5).

For him, in fact, Chinese traditional culture is generally a synthetic mode of thinking and Chinese people have a custom of integration in essence. Therefore, he looks for promoting the establishment of consensus (6). This consensus should be in political and governmental, economic and ecological, educational and cultural, religious and spiritual aspects (14-19). Rather than appreciating various fragments of knowledge, society and action, there should be aim to integrate thought and practice, individual and society, and the past, present and the future, thus making of a mode of existence with certain internal uniformity. Therefore, comprehensive thinking habits should start from childhood, as well as awareness of ecology, equality, balance, and harmony (18).

#### Commentary

Yong's idea of postmodernism, better say, constructive postmodernism in his own words, is significantly different from Western concept of postmodernism in spirit and essence. He has tried to integrate postmodernism with Chinese culture and has reshaped postmodernism without attacking it; rather he has given a soft touch to it.

Yong has not only tried to reshape postmodernism but he has tried to reshape traditional Chinese culture also. A respect for science and social innovation has a place in his thought. He wants harmony and integration in all aspects and fields of life. Therefore, he wants to promote an establishment of consensus. He has talked about the harmony of all religions.

For Young, tradition has to be invented with new introduction and this introduction has to be in association with process thought. This process thought integrates the positive elements of tradition, western postmodernism, different fragments of knowledge in society and action leading towards internal harmony and uniformity.

#### VII

#### Kenichi Mishima : Discourse of Japanese National Uniqueness

Kenichi Mishima, a modern day philosopher who studied in Germany, puts forward a realistic view point about the establishment in Japan. He is critical about Takeshi Umehara, director general of the International Research Center for Japanese Studies (IRCJS) in Kyoto, Japan's most famous philosopher, who sets out his ideas of 'Japanese uniqueness' tracing his disillusionment with Western philosophy and his rediscovery of Japan's Shinto roots (*Japan: Locked in the Discourse of National Uniqueness* 2000, 78).

Prime Minister Nakasone and his colleagues Tadao Umesao, Hiroshi Umehara, and Hayao Kawai founded IRCJS for self assertion of Japanese civilization. They innovated the Japanese tradition but for dubiousness and unrealistic assessment. For Umesao, "Japanese society is characterized by not only inner homogeneity but also by

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equality which has seldom been achieved in world history" (Mishima: Japan: LDNU, 78). Therefore, Mishima says, "no diplomat would dispute positive images of his country even if he felt inwardly that they no longer correspond to any reality (75)." But, one has to be realistic.

Tradition of discourse is the tradition of 'Nihonjinron', in Japan. It can be defined as "thinking about the Japanese or about Japanese culture, discussing and holding forth about the question of who the Japanese are, what constitute their specific culture, a discussion about identity..." (Japan: LDNU, 75).

Looking at difficulties in Japan's history, Mishima says:

On the one hand there are discourses justifying own shortcomings in the name of culture, on the other hand there is the unholy alliance of universal values legitimately put forward by the west [I see reference to postmodernism here!] and the actual economic and political power possessed by the west. (Japan: *Locked in the Discourse of National Uniqueness*, 79)

#### Commentary

Whether it is 'West's Japan' or 'Japan's Japan', Japanese are trying to become realistic about their identity today. In many of the aspects they catch up the west and are constructed by the West's power and economy. They follow 'Eastern Ethics but Western Science'. They feel that, there shall be a positive development in innovation and identity construction through tradition because myth of Japanese uniqueness has been exposed. The world opinion would see Japan as strange animals. Therefore, they need to stay away from this essentialization project and work for the common good with new integrative orientation. Mishima has become critical about cultural and discursive background of Japanese ethnocentrism or uniqueness project, and explicitly sees why the official Japan has such difficulty in coming to terms with its own past. Therefore, any construction of 'Japaneseness' project shall be accompanied by realistic perception.

### VIII

#### Conclusion

The three eminent Indian exponents reflect different strategic dimensions on Indian perspective towards a western theory. Many of their major and minor conclusions (*siddhaanta* and *upasiddhaant*) rise from the oneness (not absolutist) principle of Indian tradition. As the civilization is moving forward many foreign theories and interpretations are trying to influence the land and sometimes impose their authorities looking at the vulnerability of the tradition due to internal and external changes. Now, it is not too late to construct our own structure and theory (Kapoor EOSLT: A Rejoinder 2001, 1-34), blending or combining with gracious foreign/world elements (Singh WPPI 2001, 7 and Pei Yong Why China?, 1-19), but our own pristine tradition (blunt or sharp that we must reshape or remodel) must have a presence within the new system, which we are inheriting unconsciously or consciously from long time (Paranjape PI:SPA, [www.Makarand.com](http://www.Makarand.com)).

On the other hand, we must also clean our own clothes [underwear] if there is any dirt, to uphold a larger goal and involve in bigger world community. Therefore, a systematic deliberation of thinkers is urgent to thwart any future crisis and these thinkers should have a larger *aatma* (soul) of 'realistic perception' (Mishima Japan:LDNU, 74-82). In the name of tradition, if our *genro* (extra constitutional body of elders in Japanese term) can not resolve the issue, the succeeding generation may

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suffer. I must say, reflections towards postmodernism are only a platform by which we may visualize the future and establish a firm ground in present.

We see here two options. One is to move ahead with the positive elements of postmodernism with innovation and build a constructive postmodernism by 'process thought' like Chinese way (Pei Yong Why China?, 10). Secondly, we have to be innovative about our redefining traditionalism with realistic assessment [we have to be careful here], and must not define ourselves as Japanese establishment defines a Japanese uniqueness by essentializing its tradition of Shinto roots and face a dubious credibility (Mishima *Japan: LDNU*, 74).

In addition, theory or structure building is possible only when we understand the theory of needs. For an assertion of Indian tradition, we need to have in advanced (not extreme) materialist position where there will not be any distinction of national or regional categories. Now, can we give a systematic realistic strategy/ dream/ imagination like American dream with extra literary concern for the Indian society? We find, there are many obstacles in innovation of a new theory making in India unlike China and Japan. However, we have to be careful about our own construction with realistic perception. Therefore, I conclude and recommend five strategic innovation process of our Indian tradition for a new theory or structure through present discussion: 1. We must develop the concept of 'why' comprehensively to persuade within and outside 2. We must see a way to build consensus of different categories in the process and integrate the interests of all categories 3. We have to look for ways to redefine our traditionalism and blend it with positive foreign modes for innovation 4. We must integrate and rediscover internal harmony through different constructive process thoughts 5. We have to have realistic perception in our own rediscovery and redefining process.

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## Rasa-Dhvani and British Formalism: Some Random Thoughts\*

Ragini Ramachandra

My little, woefully little knowledge of Sanskrit Poetics and even less of British Formalism fills me with trepidation to stand before an august gathering like this and talk on so profound a subject as *Rasa-dhvani*. If I have still dared to venture into regions beyond my capabilities which must look like impudence in the eyes of the learned, it is purely out of personal considerations: (a) my regard for Dr. C.N. Ramachandran whose gracious invitation I could not decline though it came when I was in the midst of a rigorous schedule and (b) my father Prof. C.D. Narasimhaiah's passionate, I would say an almost messianic fervour for the cause of ancient Indian literary criticism. Such his overmastering concern to resurrect our traditional approaches to works of art that he would go so far as to affirm:

If I had many lives to live I would devote them all to impress on the world the supreme end of a work of art is the realization of *rasa* (sap, juice), India's greatest contribution to the world of aesthetics. ("Introduction" to *East West Poetics at Work*)

If on the one hand this proved to be an overwhelming reason for me to associate myself with the present Seminar despite all my inadequacies of scholarship, on the other I also had to pay my debt to Prof. Tee Nam Shree himself whose *Bharatiya Kavya Mimamsa* I relied upon to a very large extent for my chapter on Sanskrit Poetics in my doctoral thesis way back in the 80s. I could not have found a better occasion to pay my homage to the author of such a seminal work as this.

Even so, my modest attempt to speculate on such a lofty theme can only be likened to the desire of the moth for the star. I do not know where and how I should begin, for here is a theory which takes one right back to immemorial antiquity - to the time of the *Vedas* and the *Upanishads*, which means, one is not merely caught up in a time warp but also in an endless labyrinth of highly abstrusive and metaphysical thought.

Since I propose to concentrate on the theory of *rasa-dhvani* in the first part of my paper I shall reserve my comments and observations on British Formalism to the latter half.

It is a known fact that no other concept has invited as many interpretations as that of *rasa*. The very fact that it should be associated with *dhvani* suggests that it can only be suggested and not articulated directly! Is that the reason why so eminent a scholar as Dr. K. Krishnamoorthy terms it a "riddle" in Sanskrit Poetics? But paradoxically enough its fascination lies precisely in this mystique about it, its propensity to "tease us out of thought".

Though Bharata is the earliest known exponent to have used the word *rasa* in criticism, it is said to have figured even earlier, in the *Rig Veda*, in the *Satapatha Brahmana*, in *Bṛhadaranyaka Upanishad*, *Chandogya Upanishad* and *Taittiriya Upanishad*. Though the precise meaning of the term has eluded generations of scholars down the ages, the generally accepted meaning given to it in Vedic literature as sap, juice, taste or flavour lingers on. It is possible that Bharata is indebted to the *Rig Veda* for this meaning

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embodied in his famous *rasa* sutra. In any case it is evident that he uses this term from dietetics to describe the complex process of aesthetic enjoyment in his monumental work, the *Natyasastra*, not surprisingly considered as the fifth *veda* in view of its encyclopaedic nature.

It is astonishing that as far back as 3rd century B.C. Bharata should not merely have pinpointed as to what constitutes the soul of poetry even though he may not have used the very word "soul" but also defined with precision the existence and characteristics of all the mental states (*bhavas*) in man and their role in the genesis of *rasa*. His enumeration of eight *rasas* and three *bhavas* and further classification of *bhavas* into eight *sthayibhavas*, thirty-three *Vyabhicharibhavas* and eight *satvika bhavas* is so satisfying that even today they form an important critical framework in the judgement of Sanskrit Literature. The repeated use of his maxim by Sanskrit scholars, *vibhava-anubhava-vyabhichari samyogad rasanishpattih*, the union of *vibhavas* (stimulants or determinants), *anubhava* (bodily expressions or physical manifestations) and *vyabhichari-bhavas* (diverse fleeting emotions) results in the generation of *rasa*, that supreme aesthetic bliss.

Since Bharata used the term *rasa* primarily in relation to drama, his attention was focused on what a playwright should do to delineate a particular *rasa* and how it should be done so as to offer joy and delight to the spectator.

Ranging through the entire gamut of the art of drama, he discussed every conceivable aspect of stage-acting with minute detail. The key word here however is *rasa*, the word that Abhinava says sums up the whole of Sanskrit literary criticism. Though it has invited endless interpretations ever since its inception Bharata himself explains it quite simply and innocuously by drawing analogies from the medical and culinary worlds. According to him the combination of different *bhavas* makes for *rasa* in the same way as a union of different components in medicine results in creating a particular effect, or, just as people who partake of a dish prepared with different ingredients derive a delectable experience, so also spectators enjoy a play composed with the help of different elements. In other words they enjoy the *sthayibhavas* and feel delighted. Bharata calls this enjoyment *Natyarasa*.

It should however be noted that for him no emotion can be called *rasa* unless it is aesthetically excited. Poetry is not a record of the poet's personal emotions. His own raw, personal, ordinary emotions have no place in poetry. They have to be sifted, selected, organized and presented aesthetically so as to arouse the *sthayibhavas* in the *sahridaya*. The emotions thus sorted out by the poet, become elemental and universal and shed their individualistic peculiarities. As *rasas* they do not imply the emotions actually lived through by the poet. They refer only to a disinterested contemplation of emotional states which have a universal appeal. The exclusion of the irrelevant personal emotions helps the poet achieve a pure aesthetic state. Centuries later Anandavardhana made it clear that it was in such a contemplative mood that the great sage Valmiki composed his immortal epic, the *Ramayana*. Valmiki's poetic outburst in the opening verse which alludes to the hunter's killing of the male *krauncha* bird and the sorrow of the female bird is one of the finest and most convincing examples one can give to affirm how personal grief can be transmuted into art; how *shoka* can be transformed into *shloka*. *Sokah slokatvam agatah*. Hence, *Rasa* becomes *alaukika* and transcendental.



But scholars like Dr. Krishnamoorthy believe that Bharata did not indulge in any philosophical discussions about aesthetic experience. Though all the important rhetoricians like Bhamaha and Dandin who came after him recognized the importance of *rasa*, it was Anandavardhana however who not merely accorded it the pride of place, but extended its scope to include poetry as well. In fact, he went so far as to claim that even conventional themes can be invested with freshness and novelty if imbued with *rasa*. He firmly believed that that poetry where *rasas* are evoked satisfactorily is the highest kind of poetry - *uttama kavya* or *dhvani kavya*. In such a context he could have said that *rasa* is the soul of poetry. But being a distinguished critic he was conscious of the dangers of its being applied formally and mechanically like *alankaras* before. The realization that by its very nature *rasa* can only be suggested, explains the genesis of the great *rasa-dhvani* theory.

So here is a critic who borrowed the term *Dhvani* from the grammarians who maintain that sound in its eternal form of *Sphota* (literally meaning 'burst') is identical with Ultimate Reality itself that can only be suggested and never expressed and applied it to poetry with remarkable appropriateness, for the ultimate content of poetry also defies all attempts at direct expression. It is this abiding faith in the power of *dhvani* to catch subtle shades of meaning and communicate what is otherwise incommunicable that makes him conclude *Kavyasyatma dhvanih*, *dhvani* is the soul of poetry. The suggested sense of course can be understood not by someone who merely knows grammar and lexicon but only by a man of taste who knows the essence of poetry. Amazing in its sophistication and modernity of outlook the theory is justly regarded as epoch-making in the history of Sanskrit Criticism. It shouldn't be surprising therefore if his path-breaking work *Dhvanyaloka* which revolutionized hither-to-held beliefs and conceptions regarding poetry should be looked upon as the last word in Sanskrit Criticism.

However, it was left to Abhinava Gupta, Anandavardhana's commentator, an innovator and original thinker, the author of two very important works, *Abhinavabharathi* and *Dhvanyaloka-Lochana* to invest *Rasa* with a metaphysical dimension. *Rasa* for him is *lokottara*, an ideal state, a transcendental mode of consciousness in which the essence of things is intuitively apprehended. Certainly he spoke for all of us when he expressed the view that *rasa* is not something we know, but something we feel. In a revealing observation he compares aesthetic experience to the perception of "a wondrous magic flower", *adbhutapushpa*. Ordinarily there is no parallel to what takes place in a literary experience. It is no more definable than is the Supreme Reality. He equates *Rasa* with the critic's *akhandananda* which is nothing but a burst of innate *atmananda* mentioned in the *Upanishads* divested of its shackles of self-interest though temporarily. Abhinava Gupta's view of *Rasa* has been accepted in later times as an unchallengeable truth.

Even this brief and sketchy survey of one of the greatest theories in Sanskrit criticism should provide us with a peep into the saga of its evolution from the time of Bharata to that of Abhinava Gupta. The very vocabulary used to describe aesthetic experience like *rasanubava*, *rasasvada*, *ananda*, *ahlada* could be a contribution to world literary criticism not to speak of that unparalleled phrase *Brahmananda-Sahodarah* (twin-brother to the tasting of Brahman).

It is time now to take a quick look at the British Critical scene - certainly not the whole of it - but only a small, in fact a miniscule part of it which offers promise of a



possible rapport, even a slight hint at a possible commingling of two streams of thought. At the outset it would certainly seem far-fetched even to think of attempting a comparative study of two modes of criticism so different from each other, for to put it in a nutshell, one is empirical and the other metaphysical which not merely seems to make any further comment superfluous but also forbid any further exploration. But then fortunately there are honourable exceptions as in the critical writings of Arnold and Eliot which encourage an Indian student of criticism to look for echoes, reverberations, similarities, parallelisms and influences.

Though it is Eliot in whom one discerns the strongest traces of Indian metaphysical thought, one must still admit that it is Arnold who paved the way for Eliot and Eliot himself might not have been possible without Arnold. Some of his oft-quoted phrases from his very important and well-known essay "The Function of Criticism at the Present Time" have made him justly famous. But what makes him even more relevant to the Indian reader is his concern for preserving as he himself puts it, the intellectual and "spiritual" character of criticism.

Being a very responsible critic he takes stock of the existing situation in Great Britain and finds both Poetry and Criticism wanting - poetry because the poets did not know enough and criticism because practical considerations had stifled it not allowing it to dwell on "absolute beauty" and widen its "spiritual horizon". As a result its best "spiritual" work had been ill-accomplished, he rues.

It is significant that Arnold should have exhibited a spirit and a temper that comes very close to the Indian value system. Is that because he had himself realized the importance of a knowledge of "Eastern antiquity" in addition to Greek and Roman? His definition of criticism as a "disinterested endeavour" and his specific reference to "the Indian virtue of detachment" should bear ample testimony to his Oriental predilections. Even though his views may not have a direct connection with the *Rasa-dhvani* theory as such his insistence on "disinterestedness" and "detachment", two key words that are integral in our understanding of the theory, should justify our including him here. It is also salutary that he should have been concerned with a criticism which "alone can much help us for the future", a criticism which would keep man from "self-satisfaction" and lead him towards "perfection" by making his mind dwell upon "what is excellent in itself" as well as "absolute beauty". This preoccupation with perfection, excellence, beauty and detachment reflects a sensibility that is quite Indian.

From this exalted but rather generalized notion of Criticism where we catch no elaborate and sustained but rather fleeting glimpses of the Indian elements, we might now pass on to a more pointed, a more specific kind of criticism written by Eliot. One has in mind his essays on "The Function of Criticism", "Tradition and the Individual Talent" and *Hamlet* which encourage an Indian student of literature to correlate some of his views with certain thought processes in our own critical system.

At the cost of repetition, I would like to reiterate that each of these three essays has several important insights to offer that bear an amazing degree of affinity with Indian critical thought. To begin with "The Function of Criticism", the essay throws up two very important observations. In the first place Eliot's definition of the function of criticism itself as "the common pursuit of true judgement" and criticism as a place for "quiet co-operative labour" corresponds to the Indian concept of *sahridayatva*. Even more arresting and startling in its similarity to the Indian concept of *Sphota* is the



remark made in the course of the essay:

...the critical discrimination which comes so hardly to us has in more fortunate men flashed in the very heat of creation; (emphasis added)

The crucial word used here is "flash". One wonders whether Eliot was indeed influenced by Bhartrhari's philosophical concept. Similarly one also finds an echo of Rajashekara's *bhavayitri* and *karayitri pratibha* in the following passage in the same essay:

The critical activity finds its highest, its true fulfilment in a kind of union with creation in the labour of the artist.

Eliot's essay on *Hamlet* can be considered as an important landmark in English literary criticism chiefly because of his "inordinately famous phrase", "objective correlative". Describing *Hamlet* as the "Mona Lisa of Literature" Eliot dismisses the play as an artistic failure because Shakespeare has failed to provide the necessary "objective correlative" for Hamlet's eccentric behaviour. Evidently the phrase is Eliot's equivalent for Bharata's *Vibhava* (cause). It might be mentioned incidentally that to a Bengali correspondent's query if he had read Bharata's *Natyasastra*, Eliot had replied "he was acquainted with the author of *Vibhava*". The entire passage which expresses the "artistic inevitability" of "objective correlative" bears remarkable resemblance to Bharata's own views on the indispensability of *vibhava* for *rasanishpattih*.

Similarly Eliot's "auditory imagination", says C.D. Narasimhaiah, may be an aspect of *dhvani*, a feeling for syllable and rhythm which as Aurobindo claimed, is heard in the ear of the ear. For Dr. Krishnamoorthy too, Eliot's "Three Voices of Poetry" corresponds to Anandavardhana's three kinds of *Dhvani*. The Sanskrit equivalent for "voice" is *dhvani* which literally means "tone". A definite communion of thought between the two critics notwithstanding the barriers of time and space is what one notices here. Yet another example one might invoke is Eliot's expectation of a poet to "apprehend his thought as immediately as the odour of a rose" which recalls to one's mind Anandavardhana's analogy between the experiencing of *rasa-dhvani* and the piercing of a 100 lotus leaves with a single needle, making the time-lag hardly perceptible in both cases.

Yet another major contribution of Eliot's with a strong Indian slant is his theory of Impersonality. Nowhere does he come so close to Indian thought as in his attempt to define the process of depersonalization with the help of examples from the world of science in his epoch-making essay "Tradition and the Individual Talent". The poet is presented only as a medium, a catalytic agent or *nimitta matra* in the language of Indian philosophy and no more. His definition of poetry not as an expression of personality but as an extinction of it appears to have been lifted straight out of our own value system. But as far as the theory of *rasa* itself is concerned, we do not get to know Eliot's response as we would in the case of a Susan Langer, who extolled it in ecstatic terms.

Interestingly if Eliot cites the example of Keats's "Ode to a Nightingale", to expatiate on the theme of life emotion vs. art emotion, Anandavardhana gives the example of the episode of the hunter and the bird in Valmiki's *Ramayana* to elucidate a similar argument. Eliot's own acknowledgement that his essay halts at the frontier of metaphysics and mysticism keeps the door open for conjectures and speculations regarding influences. But whatever the truth is, the fact remains that Indian critics



had discussed all these subtleties and nuances of literature a full thousand years before anything like that was echoed in the west.

But the paradox is for those of us here cut off from our own inheritance and knowing not the greatness of *dhvani*, we need a British critic to tell us, "a word is a raid on the inarticulate" or "great poetry communicates itself even before it is understood, through hints and guesses". But today even he can be of help to us, for his contribution lies in sending us back to our own heritage.

For that matter even a young poet like Keats who was no critic strictly speaking, but such his philosophical disposition and critical maturity that his views on Beauty, Truth and Imagination, not to speak of his much admired concept "Negative Capability" warrant making connections with Indian Aesthetics.

But what these connections establish is the fact that they are at best "echoes" of a sound that was originally sounded here, under the azure Indian skies.

It shouldn't sound presumptuous therefore to claim that the theory of *Rasa-dhvani* whose philosophical implications have simply no parallel anywhere in the world should become part of the world cultural heritage.

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## *Aucitya* in Jayanta Mahapatra's Poetry

Subhra Prakash Das

This paper intends to make an assessment of Jayanta Mahapatra's poetry with *aucitya* as one of the all-encompassing parameters of Indian Poetics and to construct how Mahapatra, considered as a postmodern poet, adheres (not by force but by choice) to the strict standards set by Indian rhetoricians. It also focuses on the validity of application of such a paradigm in both long and shorter poems of Jayanta Mahapatra.

### I

Among all the concepts in Indian Poetics, *aucitya* (translated as propriety, decency, decorum, fitness etc) is the most loosely defined. This is so because *aucitya* is more experiential than normative, not totalitarian but aesthetic. It is more discretionary than sermonic. (Chandran 31) Thus, there is a fine line of distinction between *aucitya* and *anaucitya* (meaning impropriety or indecency) and all good poetry must carry out a 'harmonious adaptation of the poetic means - language, figure, image and so on to the poetic end.' (Chari 229)

The most ardent advocate of *aucitya* as the *jivita* (life-force) of poetry, Ksemendra (11th century), who borrowed the concept from his predecessor, Anandavardhana (9th century), defines it in his seminal work *Aucityavicaracarica* (AV) merely as 'the striking expression in which the excellence of an object is rightly depicted' (emphasis added, AV 4). He lists ten types of *camatkara* (strikingness) - charm that arises without deliberation and with deliberation, charm that pervades a whole composition, that resides in its parts, that is found in words meanings, sound and sense, figures of speech, *rasa*, and finally, in the story of a famous personality (AV 8-10). Although Ksemendra provides profuse illustrations from various texts, the concept of *aucitya* ultimately comes down to assuming a more or less variable criterion of taste or personal appreciation.

Sheldon Pollock believes that credit goes to Ksemendra, a student of Abhinavagupta, who was instrumental behind the permeation of aesthetic theory by social theory, because it was he who turned the underlying idea of propriety, *aucitya*, 'a state of being in accordance with the nature of a person or a thing', into the core of his concept of literature (27).<sup>1</sup>

Kuntaka (10th-11th century), whose treatise *Vakroktivijitam* (meaning deviance as the life of poetry) established a new school, also considers propriety as 'that quality by virtue of which the poetic subject gains value in a most vivid manner; in fact, it may be regarded as the vital essence of all poetic description' (VJ 1.53). Thus he considers propriety to be 'another literary quality' that adds to the grandeur of the subject by means of its supreme clarity and any use of figures of speech in conformity with propriety is sure to produce beauty (ibidem).

Kuntaka also painstakingly catalogues different types of *aucitya* - *aucitya* in word, sentence, composition, excellence, rhetorical embellishments, *rasa*, region, time, condition, state of soul, existence, purpose, nature, purgation, union, imagination, physical state, judgement, name and divine blessings under four major heads of *mimamsa* (logic), *kavyasastra* (dramaturgy), *lokatantra* (folk life) and *kavi* (poet-creator) - all ultimately leading to the *aucitya* of *rasa*.

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In discussing *aucitya*, the aesthetes, therefore, have to accommodate the problem of *gunas* (attributes) becoming *dosas* (flaws) and vice versa, depending upon contextual factors. As Bhamaha points out, given a proper context, even a flaw becomes a virtue. 'Some objectionable words attain a grace on account of the place they occupy like collyrium, which is really dirt, when applied to the eyes of a beautiful damsel' (KL 1.55). Dandin also believes that blemishes can be turned into beauties by the skill of a competent poet. No hard and fast rules can, therefore, be adopted in considering the *aucitya* of 'fearful symmetry' in Blake's "The Tiger" and that of the flash of lightning turning into a 'river of gold' in Coleridge's "The Ancient Mariner" - both intend to instill a sense of wonder.

As in the use of rhetorical devices, in the 'making' of poetry too *aucitya* plays its part. This is shown in an analysis of Wallace Stevens, Carlos Williams and Marianne Moore by Narayan Chandran in 'Aucitya in Modern American Poetry'. Chandran finds Moore's *aucitya* to be an 'admirably variable concept involving levels of discrimination, relative significance and contingent values', and Stevens's *aucitya* as being that of a poet as a realiser: a cart and a horse being not two, but three - the cart, the horse and the two together. He also finds in Carlos Williams 'minor properties of order, harmony, background etc [being] subsumed in this *aucitya* which helps us conduct reading relations without frantic recourse to meanings. Seeing well is a courtesy.' (31-41) This, indeed, is *anaucitya* exponent's invitation to postmodern critics. The element of 'discrimination' between propriety and impropriety also correlates the questions of morality and adaption in literature. Ksemendra took strong exceptions to Kalidas's portrayal of amorous dalliance of Siva-Parvati in *Kumarasambhava* (Canto VIII), now one of the oft-quoted instances of *anaucitya*, which his master Anandavardhana had noticed as vulgar.

Thus, the reader, not the critic-theorist, is the lone arbiter of *aucitya* and *anaucitya*. Hence, the importance of *sahridaya*, literally meaning one with a sympathetic heart or a connoisseur. For Abhinavagupta, a *sahridaya* is one 'whose constant engagement with literature has made his mind a clear mirror and who has developed a capacity for identification with the subject matter and with the writer's heart' (*Locana* 1.1). Every sympathetic reader should possess enough *bhavayitri pratibha* (sympathetic imagination) to assess the creativity of an author.

As Kushwaha explains, the reader is privileged over scholar because of his freedom from bias, because of his *tanmayibhavana* (total absorption) and because he is guided by insight, not theory (87). Reader Response theorists now call a *sahridaya* a 'competent reader'; Emerson called him 'a good reader'; and long back Horace thought of him as 'fit audience'. The *sahridaya* scores over 'fit audience' because of his quest for aesthetic relish in a work as a whole. The artist strives to maintain *rasa* through proportion, harmony and strict artistic relevance; and the *sahridaya* relishes the work for its aesthetic cohesion between the whole and the parts, and among the parts themselves. Literature (*Kavya*), in the Indian conception, is, therefore, a placing together of different parts of language which are mutually agreeable or in harmony (quoted in Sharma 58), which corroborates Cicero's dictum that 'decorum is a principle of life transported to art' (quoted in Ray 2).

## II

Jayanta Mahapatra's long poem, "Relationship", of some seven hundred lines in twelve Parts, written mostly in iambic and trochaic metres (and sometimes in

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anapaestic too) have been considered an epic by many. It can indeed be referred to as a grand narrative.<sup>2</sup>

Mahapatra, from the beginning till the end, situates himself as the sole narratorial voice that sweeps the panoramic history of modern Orissa (previously called Kalinga) so that Aristotelian Unities remain unbroken. This precisely is his *aucitya* in this long poem (which is different in his shorter poems as analysed later). His quest for his own identity among his long-lost ancestors in the Kalinga War of 3rd century B.C. and the great warrior and maritime races of Orissa (from 5th-6th century A.D. to 13th-14th century A.D.) serve his lone relationship with the glorious past of his homeland.

Part One (with four stanzas) acts as a modernist invocation, setting the tone of the narrator's identity. The first stanza talks of 'the virtuous waters of the hidden springs of the Mahanadi', the second of 'dreams' of 'artisans of stone,/ messengers of the spirit', the third of 'the sailing ships of those maritime ancestors/ who have vanished in the black Bay without a trace' and, finally, the fourth of the narrator himself 'walking back and forth/ not knowing whether the earth/ would let me find finally its mouth'.

Needless to say, the composition of the four stanzas is deliberate and the poet carefully chooses his *vibhavas* (causes), *anubhavas* (effects) and *sancaribhavas* (temporary feelings), which are fully developed later in the rest of the poem, so that they all lead toward the evocation of one dominant emotion that is pathos. His own 'memory' - a metaphor for the collective memory of the Oriya race for some two and a half thousand years - brings into play the dichotomy between the past and the present in the reader's mind with such 'objects', narrative, style etc that, as Rayan explains, 'act as signifiers, with the reader's emotional response as their common signified'. He further explains that '[T]he relations of the objects in the work to the emotion evoked is traditionally one of congruity (*aucitya*), although modernism at times replaces this with willed incongruity' (14).<sup>3</sup>

As Mahapatra watches his mother's grave through the window, 'Orion crawls like a spider in the sky/ while the swords of the forgotten kings/ rust slowly in the museums of our guilt' (II.24-26). A veiled comparison is laid between this poet-narrator and the Tiresias of *The Waste Land*, because 'the man with many memories/ doesn't know what to do with them/ ... for the boats he let loose upon the water/ merely bob up and down, going nowhere' (II.28-32). Fleeting images of grief, frustration and helplessness abound in the epic producing an overall picture of ruin, degeneration, fall and decay of a once-glorious heritage.

Mahapatra does not dwell upon a single image for too long. For him allusions are aplenty and break upon the reader's mind in short but repeated waves. The reader then correlates these objective correlatives and works upon the suggestive meaning of the work. 'It is hard to tell now/ ... how the age-old proud stones/ lost their strength and fell,/ and how the waters of the Daya/ stank with the bodies of my ancestors' (III.5-10). The age-old proud stones are silent testimony to the craftsmanship of Oriya artisans who built hundreds of temples of exquisite design and taste, the Sun Temple of Konarak being Mahapatra's most favourite.<sup>4</sup> The river Daya still flows, albeit in a shrunken shape, near Bhubaneswar.<sup>5</sup>

During the narrator's long journey, images of present Cuttack town crisscross frequently: 'I want to finish my prayer ... / a prayer to draw my body out of a thousand years' (IV. 51-53). Historically, Cuttack is one thousand year old from where the famous Ganga dynasty ruled a vast tract of land from the Ganges to the Godavari in Eastern

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India. Mahapatra's helplessness in the present scene is straightforward (without any false promise of a rosy future). 'What can save us now / but the miracle we have been waiting for?' (VI.17-18)

It will indeed be a case of impropriety if the narrator does not accept a tiny part of the blame for all this decay around him.

It is my own life  
that has cornered me beneath the stones  
of this temple in ruins, in a blaze of sun.  
Sun-lions, standing against the steps,  
whose return to life are you waiting for? (VIII. 1-5)

Throughout this grand narrative, the narratorial voice is heard which cannot be exacted at any particular movement of the text, but is felt to be all-pervasive. Indian poetics strictly lay down the rule that the author should not appear anywhere in the work as much as the Creator does not appear per se in His creations.

Relationship ends with an epilogue (Part XII) in true epic style.

Fear of my guilt, I bid you farewell. ...  
In your dance is my elusive birth, my sleep  
that swallows the green hills of the land  
and the crows that quicken the sunlight in the veins  
and the stone that watches my sadness fly in and out  
of my deaths, a spiritless soul of memory.

The epilogue is an attempt to 'make sense of history' and forces the *sahrdaya* to take a journey along with the poet's 'spiritless soul of memory'. As Misra puts it, '[T]he function of *sahrdaya* is that of a crucible in which one's desire, passion, love, hatred and one's understanding of things are put to melt in an intense heat of compulsions to communicate or to receive' (51). Misra also brings out the role of the reader in differentiating between sensual enjoyment and aesthetic pleasure. The reader is able to relish this aesthetic pleasure in "Relationship" which, sadly enough, he fails to do in the smaller poems of Jayanta Mahapatra.

The true reader is transported to a higher world where he is able to generalize his emotions (*sadharanikarana*) and is able to transcend beyond the Kalinga War and beyond the political and economic excellence of long-lost kingdoms of Orissa. 'Attainment of aesthetic process is a process of unique confrontation between the universalized subject and generalized object of experience. This unique confrontation cannot happen unless the Principle of Propriety is retained in at least matters of creation of objective correlatives.' (Datta 6-7)

The concluding part of this essay critiques some of the 'far-fetched objective correlatives' that Jayanta Mahapatra employs in some of his smaller poems resulting in the readerly failure to rise above the level of mere *bhavabhasa* (semblance of emotion, not emotion proper).

### III

Jayanta Mahapatra is a master of objective correlatives. In his poems events play a lesser role than images and the reader is made to unearth the reality from several minor details that he focuses on and his keen observation leads the reader from one detail to another in quick succession. His language, figures and images bear the hallmark of a sensitive poet as he creates myriad poetic moods within a very short span.

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Yet, in many of his poems he breaks his own *aucitya* where he deliberately situates images of sensual titillation that are hardly conducive to the *bhava* of the poem.

In a small poem like "Landscape" where the correlatives are autumn rice fields of Orissa and colour of tall grass with feathery white flowers, Mahapatra bemoans how 'we are prepared/ to tolerate our own unhappiness with God' and how

silence condemns, left behind  
by the great net of time's vendetta', leading us toward a relish of quietude.  
In between we find Again the fields of man are rugged with fear,  
And the breasts of young girls  
Do not rise and fall with their own breathing.

This is certainly *anaucitya* by any socio-cultural standards and, more importantly, Mahapatra commits an error of *rasabhasa* (clash of discordant emotions) because the feeling-tone of 'fear' in no way facilitates the smooth arousal of resignation and quietude in an autumn landscape.

The poem "Slum" begins appropriately with 'scarred shacks', kitchen fires and mirror in the dark throwing back 'pain and plain despair', the accepted concomitants of poverty and desolation associated with slum life. But the second half brings in a jarring figure of 'the familiar old whore on the road/ [splitting] open in the sugary dusk'. As if this is not sufficient to arouse a feeling tone of disgust the next movement is still more jarring; 'her tired breasts trailing me everywhere'. In a case of further *anaucitya*, the poet introduces jackals feeding on (unknown or unidentified) rotting carcasses somewhere nearby. Mahapatra is certainly not interested to dwell upon this jackal-rotting-carcass image for too long because by now the reader truly visualizes scenes of disgust in and around the slum shack. But the old whore vanishes in a flash and in front of the poet's 'fiery eyes' there stands/ only a lonely girl, beaten in battle, all mine.' The reader surely asks which battle, but no answer is given. Instead, the girl is said to be 'sadly licking the blood from my crazed smile'. Again the baffled reader asks why 'sadly' and why the poet's smile is 'crazed' and why this crazed smile is oozing blood. The one saving grace is that the poet does not intend to elaborate upon his blood-thirst any longer. Since the *vibhavas* do not match up to one another, this small poem that begins well breaks all rules of logic and fails to rise above a host of confusing *vibhavas*. A *sahridaya* does indeed fail to come to terms with the rapid (and sometimes unconnected) succession of *vibhavas* in a small poem like "Slum".

The strain of confusion runs high in another small poem, "After the Rain", where 'in the silent sky/ a lost cloud slips by like an old whore, her dignity gone.' Mahapatra could have done away with this redundant post-rain simile because he offers other images of silent old men, dance of peacocks, last footsteps on earth etc. In the meanwhile, he juxtaposes two more incompatible images: 'Bright moons still swing from the branches,/ the dead are flung about like stale hair.' The most far-fetched interpretation may be that the rain-washed glistening leaves and flowers are called 'bright moons' while the dead ones lie strewn about in the slush. Even then the dichotomy between the whore-like lost cloud and bright-moons-dead-moons hardly lead to any constructive meaning.

Sanskrit poetics always emphasise upon evocation of *rasa* to be the proper evaluation of a literary work. As Anandavardhana points out, all other verbal features like propriety of style, figure, diction, propriety of speaker and the person addressed to



must lead toward this end. Chari too explains:

Poetic art consists in the securing of language, ideas, and so forth appropriate to this end [of evocation of *rasa*]. While, thus, the final ground of reference in poetic criticism is evocation of aesthetic moods, the only criterion of beauty is appropriateness - the idea that, in poetry, good and bad is to be determined on the ground of appropriateness and inappropriateness and that merits and faults do not obtain abstractly but depend on many interrelated factors, such as suitability of language to theme, tone, context, and so forth. The guiding principle in the determination of poetic excellences (*gunas*) and blemishes (*dosas*) is propriety. Excellences are promoters of the poetic end (*kavyotkarsa hetu*), and blemishes are depressors thereof (*tad-apakarsa hetu*). (232)

In a comparatively longer poem titled "Measuring Death", the evocation of pathos is complete, but not entirely so. This wonderful poem revolves round the central imagery of a house which is no longer a house, because its 'mysterious infra-red depths/ deceive with the weary honey of time'. The poet asks the patriarch quite tellingly, 'Dear Father,/ isn't that death under your eyes?' And again, 'But Father, is it death again/ that brought you your meanings of life/ and then guided you back to it?' Mahapatra's contemplation of death is soft, slow and sure: 'The late afternoon grows heavy/ and wrinkles at the thought of my son's death.' Death is neither merely painful nor happy. It is both. The poem concludes with a brilliant oxymoronic touch: 'Death is a handcart you push,/ through a dayful of moonlight, of sadness you can trust.'

Yet, true to his style, Mahapatra introduces in part IV of the poem the horrible 'anguish of a dying diabetic girl', aged only twenty-four, asking him 'a thousand waxen questions' and death standing by and 'proudly fingering her nipples'. Even the epithet 'proudly' smells obnoxious. Of course, the poet admits, 'I couldn't tell at all what a certain feeling was'. Before the nausea is any longer felt, he completely evaporates from the scene and begins to 'walk over the gatherings of fallen leaves and something troubles [him]'. "Measuring Death" has indeed become an absurd and unpalatable exercise and better be quickly forgotten.

"A Day in Marburg-on-the-Lahn" is an elegy written for his friend A.K. Ramanujan. They knew each other for twenty years but never met save once in Germany. Four years later Mahapatra learnt of Ramanujan's death in Chicago: 'It's four years already to that June summer's day./ Strange I never wrote to you nor did you afterwards.' Mahapatra recalls that meeting in an empty bus in Elisabethkirche in vivid detail. Others had gone shopping. The two friends sat silently soaking each other's company. Outside the bus, 'young women wandered past as we looked,/ their unintelligible talk bringing alive the animated fragrance of that clear June afternoon,/ of their cool breath the downy gold of their armpits./ Nothing else.' The last two words assume a big significance that Mahapatra does not hesitate to add. This poem, let us not forget, is an elegy where he tells the truth which comprises small details of minor significance and this is one poem where thoughts move in a train and images are not fleeting in the characteristic *aucitya*.

It should in no way be misconstrued that Mahapatra's 'whore' can always be a figure of *anaucitya*. During a nocturnal rendezvous, as in "Man of his nights", a man watches how 'The plump whore he has just left/ has brazenly gone to work on a new customer'. Since prostitution is only a profession and not an affair of emotion, the 'man' need not accuse the whore of her 'brazen' act.



In another poem, "Widow", the old woman's 'skin breaks into fickle shadows' and she waits in 'long inauspicious loneliness', while other 'malicious women' 'feed on her scandalous intestines', 'sniffing the smell of leftover death'. It is obvious that the widow is not a widow by birth, nor was she a too pious lady during her youth or middle age. By situating such a figure in company of local gossipmongers, Mahapatra has brought out an all-too-common scene that we see quite often, but hesitate to disclose.

## IV

To elaborate upon the concept of artistic end, Shankuka has offered an analogy of a horse-in-picture logic. He explains that by looking at a picture of a horse

- (i) one does not assume that it is not a real horse (*samyak jnana* - exact knowledge);
- (ii) one does not fail to understand that it is a horse (*mitthya jnana* - false knowledge);
- (iii) one does not harbor any doubt whether it is a horse (*samsaya jnana* - doubtful knowledge); and
- (iv) one does not think that it resembles a horse (*sadrasya jnana* - resemblant knowledge). (Quoted in Sharma 62-63)

For Jayanta Mahapatra, propriety requires him to present before his reader the reality around him. This he achieves admirably, especially in a long poem like "Relationship" where he past as a metaphor to focus on the interconnectedness between yesterday and today which is the knowledge of the first type, i.e., *samyak jnana*, and not the knowledge of the rest three types. Jayanta Mahapatra's end is not to propagate but to question his own 'present' identity and to persuade the reader to do so along with him. He cleverly uses his images and diction to achieve this poetic end. But it is in some of his smaller poems that his choice of imagery mars his poetic enthusiasm and he breaks the high moral ground of his *aucitya* that he has set for himself and his readers. A true *sahrdaya*, as demanded by the ancient aestheticians, cannot but fail to glare at such lapses.

## NOTES

1. For Pollock, '[T]here had been earlier paradigm shifts in the discourse on *rasa*: Anandavardhana's discovery (in the mid-ninth century) of implicature (*dhvani*) as the linguistic mechanism of *rasa*, and, more important, Abhinavagupta's shifting of the analytic focus from the process of the creation of emotion in literature to that of its reception. ("The Ends of Man at the End of Premodernity" 26)
2. In Lyotardian sense, a grand narrative or 'emancipation narrative' does not record the mere happenings of 'one damn thing happening after another'. On the other hand, it looks for a critique of some interconnection between and among events so as to 'make sense of history'. Relationship belongs to this genre of grand narrative because it is Mahapatra's professed aim to interrelate the glorious events in Orissan history and situate them in the present context.
3. Rayan argues that the signifier-signified relation is one of loose, variable signification - that is to say, suggestion (*dhvani*). Therefore, in a *dhvani-kavya* (a work of high literary merit), the activity of suggestion, whereby the 'objects' in the work accomplish the reader's response, is what defines the ontological literariness of the work. For fuller discussion, see Rayan 9-17.
4. Legend has it that twelve hundred sculptors worked for twelve years to complete the chariot shaped-temple, but failed to complete it as the crowning slab of the monument

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could not be put in its place. Finally, twelve year old Dharmapada, son of the chief architect, did the job at the middle of the night and jumped into the Bay of Bengal from the temple top to save the twelve hundred artisans from the king's wrath and disgrace. The sea is now about three kilometers from the temple which is in ruins at present.

5. The Great Kalinga War was fought in the adjoining areas of Dhauli hill and the Daya river turned red with the blood of the slain soldiers. The enormity of the loss of human lives melted the heart of King Asoka who finally took refuge in accepting and propagating Buddhism for the rest of his life.

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## Comparative Politics: An Exercise in Multilateral Influence Building

Apeksha

Literature is essentially culture-bound. The relationship pattern between the two is dialectical and organic. A particular culture produces a particularistic type of literature. Conversely literature also mirrors social and cultural ethos of its period. In its sweep and power of narration, literature is intensely contemporary and contextual. It is basically spatial and time specific. By reading Continental classics of Aeschylus, Sophocles or Euripides, one can form an idea about the Greek culture of that time. A study of the works of Plautus, Terrence, Seneca, Virgil, Bion, Theocritus and Moschus, one can have a fair idea of various facets of Roman culture. By reading the stories of Charlemagne or Roman de la Rose, one can understand the values underlying French literature. One can know a lot about medieval knight-errantry by perusing stories of Arthurian romances. Thus a piece of literature of a particular time inevitably incorporates the culture of that period.

The same is true of Indian literature and poetics. The great Indian epics *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* are true embodiments of the periods they portray. This is so even when the periodicity covered is timeless and spread over centuries. They acquaint us with the essentials of that time. By reading the poetry of Tulsidas and Kabir and Bhajans of Meera, one gets a fair sprinkling of the knowledge of Bhakti movement that swept past India of the fifteenth century.

The English literature too is time-bound. Even a cursory glance at Milton's *Paradise Lost* will give the reader sufficient insight into Christianity and teachings of the Bible. The poems and plays of Ravindra Nath Tagore such as *Natir Puja* or *Pujarini* provide the knowledge of Buddhist cult. Thus literature is the cultural base of any country, frozen in a particular space and time. It is a spatial phenomenon embedded in periodicity, incorporating strands from religion, poetics, ideology, societal structure, passions and prejudices of the periods portrayed. Literature is the genus and poetry is its species. It reverberates the beat of country's heart.

But whereas the spirit of literature is starkly contemporaneous, for its better and fuller comprehension, one has to evolve a comparative perspective. That alone will complete the search for the literary universal. This term comparative literature first appeared in 1848 in the writing of Matthew Arnold who said "How plain it is now, though an attention to the comparative literatures for the last fifty years might have constructed any one of it, that England is in a certain sense far behind the continent" (Quoted in Dhavan 9). He uses the term comparative literatures to show its plurality. He said, "No single event, no single literature, is adequately comprehended except in its relations to other events, to other literatures. The literature of ancient Greece, the literature of the Christian Middle Age, so long as they are regarded as two isolated literatures, to isolated growths of the human spirit are not adequately comprehended" (Quoted in Dhavan 10).

Following Arnold, Posnett's *Comparative Literature* appeared in the book stands in 1888. The recent use of the word comparative literature should not make us forget its literary ancestry. Terrence, in his comedy *Phormo*, published in 161 B.C., contrasted the ancient and modern tendencies in literature. Thus the Romans too highlighted the

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necessity of comparative literature. But Matthew Arnold is the pioneer to urge the importance and necessity of comparative study of literatures. The comparatists discovered identities and similarities, divergences and disparities in comparative literature. According to them, no work exists in isolation and can be comprehended more in its complementarity of various literary forms than in the autonomy of a single entity. The Indian Vedantic ideas met the idealistic ideas of post-kantian Germany. The Hindu thought met the American transcendental philosophy of early nineteenth century. It was largely in the twentieth century that the terms assumed protean connotations.

How the epics of various countries influence each other will be evident if one takes the example of Virgil's *Aeneid*, Homer's *Iliad* and John Milton's *Paradise Lost* and juxtapose them against two Indian epics viz., *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*. These epics embody unsurpassed human experience etched in matchless poetic beauty and rhythm which received the unbounded reception of readers. These epics have become a part of the consciousness of readers and writers who attempted to rewrite them in the regional language.

The epics of the world are inter-related and influence each other. Despite being geographical antipodes on the world map, India and USA drew closer to one another in the nineteenth century. The bridge that joined them was literature. "The discovery of India by Western man is one of the most significant events in history of India, indeed in the history of human civilization," observed S.K. Das (Das 1). The people who ventured to explore India were enterprising trading tycoons or sailors or missionaries. The former trekked out in search of gold and undreamt of trade opportunities while the latter wanted to spread the message of Jesus Christ. As aptly recorded in *The Philosophy of History*, what gravitated the nations towards India was "the treasures of this land of marvels, the most costly which the earth presents ..... as also the treasures of wisdom" (Das 2). The travel of traders and missionaries served as the bond that united India and America and generated American interest in Indian literary and philosophical heritage.

Prior to independence, both countries shared a common slavery of the British which created a bondage in servitude. The US trading ties with the East India Company formed the source of export of Indian thought to America. This was the connecting link. As R.C. Majumdar has rightly pointed out "every nation borrows from the country with which it comes into contact by trade, conquest or other means" (97). The world enriched itself through this trade which brought not only worldly objects such as silk, tea, spices, painting but also opened a whole range of vistas of literary, philosophical knowledge, creating spiritual and cultural contacts with India. With increasing urbanization and material acquisitions, the people of America began looking for values and spiritual rejuvenation which only the East provided. They copied ideas from Hindu philosophy which is reflected in the writings of Emerson, Alcott, Thoreau. Indian literary influence imperceptibly but invariably entered into the philosophical consciousness of the Americans. This is manifested in the writings of American transcendentalists of mid-nineteenth century. Much of the spadework was done by writers such as Sir William Jones, Charles Wilkins and Henry Colebrook.

Interestingly the philosophy of Thoreau made great impact on the perceptibility of Mahatma Gandhi. Said John Reid, "Thoreau repaid many years later and in a different measure his debt to India by giving stimulus to Gandhi's thinking" (qtd in Dhawan). Much of this was facilitated by the introduction of English as a medium of education.



in India. The Indians quickly realized that to fight the English masters, the need to learn their language was compelling but its consequences on Indian renaissance were profound and far-reaching. It facilitated a synthesis of traditional Indian values with that of the West. The blazing influence of Gandhi, Tagore and Vivekanand found its exponents in a host of Western writers and it got deeply imbued with European literary consciousness.

India is one of the few countries which offers an excellent opportunity for comparative study. Being a multi-lingual country with rich regional diversity, it is the repository of a rich, vibrant cultural heritage. Modern Indian literature has drawn inspiration from two well defined traditions. Sanskrit, Pali and Prakrat on the one hand and Continental languages on the other hand, not to talk of Arabic and Persian brought about by the Muslim conquerors. But no other foreign language shaped the sensibility and work of Indian writers more than English language. The British brought in their wake a whole range of linguistic treasure embodied in English language and were not merely interested in spreading their own language, but also opened up new vistas of cooperation by translating original classics of Indian language. This was not merely chaste translation but also transcreation. The influences coming from abroad are so well assimilated that it is difficult to find whether the flavour is distinctly Indian or foreign. The resulting works have an organic unity. The conceptualization displays the toning of an organic confluence and not just a mechanical mixing of contraries.

From the Indian classical works, *Ramayana*, *Mahabharata* and *Jataka tales* concerning the Buddhist literature, one comes across a veritable treasure of motifs, themes, forms and traditions. It is interesting to see how the two great Indian poets Kalidasa and Aswaghosa who drew literary expression from a common source i.e., Valmiki differ from each other owing to their differing perceptions rooted in Brahmanical and Buddhist traditions respectively. The verses of Valmiki inspired Kalidasa to compose *Meghaduta* which became a model for the tradition of *duta-kavyas* or messenger poems. The earlier masters supplied continuing themes and motifs to the succeeding generations of writers who treated traditional characters differently because they represented different forms and expressions to them. The names of Urvashi, Ram, Sita, Karna, the fabled golden deer of *Ramayana* and killing of Krauncha i.e. Kraunchvadha all have different meanings to different writers and got treated accordingly. The Rigvedic bard Kalidasa, Brahmanical ritualist Rabindranath Tagore and Puranic narrator Ram Dhari Singh Dinkar all have ventured to impart new meanings to their characters. The heartless woman of *Rigveda*, became a romantic nymph of Kalidasa, the quintessential beauty of Tagore and the representative of suffering humanity in the hands of Dinkar.

In the same way, Yayati of *Mahabharata* who was given to excessive sensual pleasures is used by Khandekar, in his novel to depict the essential dilemma of contemporary human civilization. The story of Karna and Kunti too was treated differently by different writers such as Tagore's *Karn-Kunti Samvad*, Shirawadhar's *Kaunteya*, Sawan's *Mritunjaya* and Dinkar's *Rashmi Rathi*. The Hindi *Chhayawadi* literature carries an indelible imprint of English Romantic revival. T.S. Eliot became a role-model for all pragtiwadi (progressive) writers of Hindi.

In Bengal, Michael Madhusudan Datt composed Odivian epistles based on the character of women from ancient Indian mythology. He also composed a literary epic on Greek model portraying an episode from *Ramayana*. Vidyasagar adapted

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Shakespeare's *Comedy of Errors* and Kalidasa's *Shakuntala*. Bankim Chandra Chatterjee wrote *Krishnacharita* like a Comtian. Sudhindranath translated French, German and English verses. In Sanskrit poetics, one can refer to a 5th century B.C. writer Bharata who spoke of ten forms of drama. Dandin talks of two-fold prose narrative *Katha* and *Akhyayoka*. Indian poetics developed in eight schools viz., *alamkara*, *riti*, *guna*, *vakro*, *auchitya*, *dhvani*, *anumana* and *rasa*. The Sanskrit poetics were marvels of literature but they remained largely unexplored owing to grave obstacles to communication caused by linguistic technicalities, mystical dross, quaint terminology and abstruse narrations that made the going hard for one not well-versed in Sanskrit. But if one succeeds in weeding out scholastic niceties, worn-out phraseology enmeshed in an opaque diction, one may come across a wealth of details, characterized by rare profundity, depth and comprehensiveness. The works of Anandvardhana, Kuntaka and Abhinavagupta bespeak a comprehensive approach which is a source of unmatched aesthetic delight. In the words of Thomas Munro "...from the earliest historic times, Oriental philosophers, rulers, priests and diviners were meditating on problems much like those which challenged Western mind. Indian... sages were meditating on arts and their potential values for man about the same time that Pythagoras, Plato and Aristotle were doing so in the West... A comparison of Eastern and Western thought shows many surprising resemblances" (qtd in Dhavan 11).

As we traverse deeper into the realm of science of poetry, we come across a healthy cross-fertilization of ideas through a comparison of Eastern and Western poetics. Both complement and supplement each other. It is no use airing indigenous superiority over others. The need of the hour is to enrich our European borrowings by mixing them with the elixir of Indian tradition, with the intent to make them relevant to our tradition and identity.

Thus comparative literature is a begetter of literary knowledge. In a narrow sense of binary relations between two literatures, it is unmeaningful being cribbed and confined to just two nations. This would make it an auxiliary discipline of history, scattered and fragmented. It becomes ubiquitous when it is multilateral, general, universal, cosmopolitan and international. A good piece of literary work worth expressing national ethos must be universal to command wide readership and appreciation. This creates, what S. Radhakrishna once said "unity of outlook as writers of different languages derive their inspiration from a common source and have more or less the same kind of experience, emotional and intellectual" (Quoted in Dhavan 20). This is more so because human nature being the same everywhere, its expression in different languages does not deter it from acquiring affinities and showing similarities with other languages. We must get over our tendency of fragmenting universal literature into national segments. To quote Rabindranath Tagore, "Just as this earth is not a patch of land belonging to different people, and to know the earth as such is to know its rusticity, so literature is not the mere total of works composed by different hands. From this narrow provincialism, we must free ourselves, we must strive to see each work of each author as a whole, that whole as a part of man's universal creativity, that universal spirit in its manifestations through world literature" (Quoted in Dhavan 15). Only then man will conquer narrow national vanities and get over his antiquarian pastime of preserving his "calculus of national credits and debts" (Wellek 2). Confining literature to just one source because of uncanny patriotic instinct will make it trivial and banal.



Comparative literature originated as a reaction to the nineteenth century literary provincialism propped up by a spirit of nationalism in Britain. The dawn of Christian era marked the beginning of comparatism in literature. The Greeks had little ideas of comparative literature because they led a cloistered existence of Spartan austerity in the closed world of ancient Hellas. The Romans, on the other hand, were highly conscious of their dependence on the Greeks and hence made elaborate parallels between Greek and Roman orators, authors and poets. This tradition was started by Quintilian and perfected by Longinus. The latter referred to Homer, Plato, Demosthenes, Thucydides and their contemporaries to show similarity among great minds. India, however, took the lead in this direction as early as the sixth century A.D. This is borne out by the commentaries of Sanskrit scholars on the plays of Kalidasa such as *Abhijanasakuntala* and *Meghduta*. Later on, scholars like Kuntaka and Abhinavagupta made great strides in this direction. Their textual criticism and stylish observations are thoroughly comparatist. Mallinatha, the great commentator on Kalidasa observed "*sitam prati hanumat sandesam manasi vidhay megha-sandesam krtavan*" which is translated in English by Krishna Chaitanya as thus: "Hanuman's mission to Lanka is the original prototype of the *Sandesa Kavya* (Message Poem) which Kalidasa stabilized as a separate literary species and which found numerous imitators in later times" (254). These poeticians and authors took a comparative view of prevailing literatures. Max Mullar once said "all higher knowledge is gained by comparison and rests on comparison" (Qtd in Dhavan 27). Because comparative narration frees the mind from literary provincialism and myopia.

Not all approve of comparative method studies. Wellek and Warren find the term troublesome" (Wellek 1973, 46) and Lane Cooper calls it a "bogus term" that makes neither sense nor syntax" and goes on to ask whether there can be comparative potatoes or comparative husk (75).

One reason, why this concept of comparative literature has invited literary censor is owing to the lack of a comprehensive, workable methodology. Holmes says "Comparative literature should not continue to be a catch-all curriculum to which all odd literary courses are relegated and which carries the title 'comparative' only as a term of false dignity..... The departments of comparative literature will no longer be mere departments of literary miscellanea where anything not desired elsewhere can be listed, and seldom taught" (71).

This, however, is no reason for abandoning comparative studies. Comparative studies provide a mechanism through which a reliable common code of literary standard can be evolved for a rational and coordinated study of Indian and Western poetics. Indian aestheticians' pithy formulations can be studied in co-operation with the Western scholars conceptual armoury of ideas and this will add to a complementarity of two strains of thought. The teaching of English, in alignment with comparative literature will make it more comprehensive and broad-based. It will then come out of its self-deceiving auto-suggestion mould and unidimensionality and acquire an authentic sensibility for greater incorporation and comprehension. It will widen its catchment area and provide for more inclusive growth. In the words of Rene Wellek "Comparative literature can be best defended and defined by its perspective



and spirit rather than by any circumscribed partition within literature. It will study all literature from an international perspective with a consciousness of the unity of all literary creation and experience" (Wellek 1970, 19).

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## Dhvani Theory and the Poetics of Post-structuralism

Stuti Khare

*Dhvani* theory first propounded by Anandavardhana and later elaborated and extended by Abhinavagupta, is perhaps the most significant addition to the already existing *rasa* theory in Sanskrit poetics. In *dhvani* theory, the suggested meaning of the word is more communicative and creative than the literal or the denotative meaning of the word. The indirectly evoked meaning, the *vyanjanartha* constitutes the very poetic element in language. In *Dhvanyaloka*, Anandavardhana asserts that *dhvani* is the soul of poetry, it is the essence of poetic language.

The Indian interpretations of the *dhvani* theory, in general, have limited this gold-mine of philosophy of language to just another feature of figurative language. Many consider this as equivalent of metaphoric aspect of language - the *laksana* of language. Perhaps the extended connotations of Abhinavagupta have either been lost sight of or could never be developed into a philosophy of language that can account for hermeneutical applications in literature and other fields of knowledge. It is only recently that some of the critics have started looking at the *dhvani* theory beyond the traditional perspectives. Lalita Pandit is one of such critics. She asserts, "*Dhvani* meaning is that which lies beyond spoken words... Through *dhvani*, poetic language reaches the condition of silence. It functions like a meta-language, generating many meanings by deploying collective and individual memory-banks, latent impressions, mental associations" (Pandit 1996).

What I am going to suggest in this article is that *dhvani* theory is not just a theory of suggested meaning or a theory limited to *vyanjanartha* or *laksana*. It is a comprehensive philosophy of language which has wider applications than just in the interpretation of literature. I also suggest that there are concrete effects of *dhvani* theory on poststructuralist theory. The theory of poststructuralism is rooted in the philosophy of language deduced and extended from Saussurean linguistics, which was deeply influenced by Indian Sanskrit traditions. I begin by making sense of *dhvani* theory in all its complexity.

'*Dhvani*', in common parlance, means 'sound'. The Sanskrit grammarians, especially Bhartrihari in his sphota-theory gave a much wider connotation to the word. 'Sphota' may be defined as an eternal, universal, indivisible linguistic entity which is manifested by sounds in the word. On articulation it becomes 'sphuta' bringing cognition to the mind of the hearer. It can be perceived as a meaning- whole beyond individual letters and words. Initially the word exists in the mind of the speaker in a state of fundamental oneness. It is concretized as a sequence of different sounds and the appropriation of the undivided word by human beings generates specific meanings which are attached to it. Thus, the consciousness of the meaning of the word is due to the sphota of the same. Practically sphota becomes manifest by the experience of the last sound of the word together with the impressions produced by the preceding sounds. Sphota in this context is *antimbuddhigrahya* (what is known by the last word) or *antivarnagrahya* (what is known by the last syllable). *Dhvani* here is perceived as the audible possibility of sound, or the material sound that carries the *tatparya* (meaning) and that reflects the word, the divine immutable *śabda*.

In Anandavardhana's conceptualization, however, *dhvani* takes on a finer nuance. While acknowledging his debt to Bhartrihari, he makes *dhvani*, 'an all

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embracing principle that explains the structure and function of the other major elements of literature - the aesthetic effect (*rasa*), the figural mode and devices (*alamkara*) and stylistic values (*riti*) and excellences and defects (*gunadosa*)' (Kapoor 20). According to Anandvardhana, *dhvani* refers to the suggestive element in poetic language, imbued with aesthetic significance. It incorporates not only the consciously stated elements of poetic discourse, but also the 'resonance' generated in the unconscious mind about the overt meanings. *Dhvani* operates at three levels, as Anandvardhana splits it into directly and indirectly expressed meanings in two:

<i>abhidha</i>	:	primary or literal meaning.
<i>laksana</i>	:	transferred or metaphorical sense
<i>vyanjana</i>	:	the suggestive meaning

The utterance or the word that conveys this meaning is called *vyanjaka*, while the meaning itself is usually termed as *vyanjana*.

The process of gathering suggested meanings from a word is akin to the trajectory of sound in the linguistic universe - just as sound reaches and is introjected by the consciousness through a succession of sound waves, similarly the suggested meaning reaches the hearer's consciousness through a succession of meanings - conventional, the contextual and the extra-contextual/tertiary. As Kapil Kapoor explains, Anandvardhana has chosen the term *dhvani* to denote the threefold sense proposed by the grammarians (Kapoor 21):

- |                                 |   |
|---------------------------------|---|
| 1) <i>Dhvanititi dhvanih</i>    | 'that which suggests' (the sound-structure of the word)                           |
| 2) <i>Dhvanyate iti dhvanih</i> | 'that which is suggested' (the semantic aspect of <i>sabda</i> )                  |
| 3) <i>Dhvananam dhvanih</i>     | 'the evoked or suggested meaning as such and the process of suggestion involved.' |

*Dhvani* is the evocative power of language, the power through which language seeks to express the unexpressed and to reveal the concealed. It is the 'subtle connoted meaning' which 'lacks any material substrate' (Isaeva 167). It cannot be generated by exhausting or stretching the literal sense, nor can it be derived by contradicting the same; even the poet himself doesn't have the capacity to evoke it. As Isaeva says, if we compare suggestion to the melody, then poet is like a flute to play with, not a composer. It is inherent in language itself: "Both *abhidha* and *laksana* are subordinated and conquered by *dhvani* when it moves on, being carried away by its passionate longing to reveal something about the universe that only language can know" (Isaeva 167). Abhinavagupta in *Locana* also articulates a similar notion: '*vyangyapradhanya hi dhvani*' (*Locana* 1:13) meaning '*dhvani* is indeed the basic sphere of suggestion.'

It may, therefore, be proposed that the concept of *dhvani* encompasses language not only in its operations but in all its manifestations, in its phenomenal and noumenal aspects. It cannot be reduced to a single meaning as 'suggestion'. In Western critical literature, *dhvani* is sometimes perceived as being synonymous with the 'implied'



'figurative' meaning. Even renowned critics like V.K. Chari dub it as merely a 'semantic theory', which has 'none of the mystical overtones associated with its counterpart in the West' (Chari 1977). This is perhaps a too simplistic and reductive viewpoint. The scholars who deny *dhvani* the mystical reverberations may be justified to some extent, but they are misplaced in their opinions when they reject it as the constitutive power of human consciousness.

Many scholars have argued that there is something in language, the surplus or the residual, which cannot be accounted for by the scientific studies of language. The same is true of *dhvani* also. As Isaeva observes:

In Western critical literature, *vyanjana* and *dhvani* are sometimes rendered as "suggestion", the "implied", figurative meaning, even the "symbolical" meaning of utterance or a single word. However, that varied list of synonymous often tends to be quite misleading, since owing to it, *dhvani* becomes easily confused and lumped together with "metaphor", "symbol" and other similar terms of western poetics (Isaeva 169).

Thus, trying to reduce *dhvani* to a neat/single meaning would be limiting its immense potential. One has to move into the unknown realm where language resides - the unconscious in the sense of historical accumulations that language gathers through its journey and that it circulates in the social field and that directly affects the formation of the Self, and other concepts that generate epistemological models. It is here that Indian traditions of knowledge can help us.

The concept of *dhvani* theory in all its comprehensiveness can be better explained when we look at the roots of philosophy of language in Indian traditions. The speculations about the nature of speech and language date back to the Vedic times in ancient India. One of the oft-quoted hymns in the *Rig Veda* expresses the cosmic character of *Vak* (the goddess of speech):

Uta tvah passyan na dadasra vacam  
Uta tvah srnam na srnotyenam  
Uta tvamasmi tanvam vi sansre  
Jayeva patya usati suvasah. (Rig Veda X. 71.4)

('One man hath ne'er seen *Vak*, and yet he seeth: One man hath hearing but hath never heard her. But to another she hath shown her beauty as a fond well-dressed lady to her husband.')

Further, Vedic seers propound that what reaches our ears or meets our eyes is a minuscule constituent of the vast sea of language. Much of it remains concealed in the womb of time and space and is manifested in speech to assume different forms.

Extending the Vedic traditions, Bhartrihari also, in *Vakyapadiya* gave the concept of the originary word, the *Sabda-brahm*, or the eternal Verbum wherein language is perceived as an ontological principle pervading the whole cosmos. As Coward and Raja observe, "It was Bhartrihari who in *Vakyapadiya* first systematically equated *Brahman* (the absolute) with language (*sabda*) going on to argue that everything else arises as a manifestation of this one *Sabda-brahman*" (Coward and Raja 34).

The profound notion of *sabdatattva* goes beyond the bounds of spoken and written language and posits language as the creator of the phenomenal, material world:

anadinidhanam brahma sabdatattvam yad aksaram

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vivartate'rthabhaven prakriya jagato yatah . (*Vakyapadiya* I.1 )

(*Brahman*, which is beyond the birth or death, is nothing but *Sabdatattva* or Speech-element itself. It is this element which never loses anything, anyway, and which thus becomes '*Aksara*'. With the help of this element only the world is capable to carry on its very existence and social behavior. And all that becomes possible through its Meaning factor only; that being its '*modus operandi*'.)

Thus the existence of the world lies in the Word. All cognitive and perceptual processes of the world ensue from the Word and the materiality of the Word is the first condition for creation of knowledge.

The *dhvani* theory can be better conceptualized and can be more meaningfully interpreted when it is glanced through these traditions of Indian philosophy of language. The Rigvedic knowledge about the Goddess *Vak* and its all pervasive power in the making of human world cannot be over emphasized in asserting that the human consciousness generates out of the linguistic structures that pre-exist the human world. In Indian traditions, the fact that *Vak* is a goddess itself creates an overarching creative and generative structure for language. The distance between the goddess and the humans further enhances the power and mystique of language. Humans can access only some limited signifiers out of the unbound, free-floating signifiers that inhabit the cosmos. In the *Rigveda*, it is asserted in the following lines:

Four are the definite grades of speech  
The learned and the wise know them  
Three of these are deposited in secret  
They indicate no meaning to the common man  
Men speak the fourth grade of speech  
Which is phonetically expressed. (*Rig Veda* I.164,45)

These traditions were available to all the scholars of philosophy of language who tried to make sense of the Self, God, essence, truth, transcendence etc. If we look at the scriptural texts in Hindu tradition like the *Upanishads*, the *Gita*, the *Vedas*, we find that they all are the storehouse of the knowledge about these concepts. *Brahma* is an overarching, all encapsulating concept that has been defined and conceptualized in various ways. This concept is of such hermeneutic value that it can explain the other concepts like truth, God and Self. So when *Sabda* is granted the status of *Sabda-brahma*, the other concepts like truth, essence that create epistemological and ontological value in knowledge systems start extending their significance to all that we call knowledge.

Hence, it is necessary to make sense of *dhvani* theory on a wider plane of the ontology of *sabda*. It is here that the *Brahma*, *Brahmanda*, *Sabda* become one and identical. They generate not only the human beings but everything that the humans understand and make sense of. Making use of Derrida's concept of 'centre' positively, the *sabda* becomes the centre which is out of the centre, which is unquestionable as the creator of human knowledge. Derrida can call this the centre out of centre, but the truth is that it is the centre that creates all the centers. Taking these ideas as the common ground for discussion between *dhvani* theory and poststructuralism, we can take further our discussion of *dhvani* theory and poststructuralist poetics.

If Structuralism is known as a radical theory, it is because it completely reversed the well concretized, established idea that the human self is the agency of knowledge. Similarly, poststructuralism is considered a radical theory because it is a critique of



the Western knowledge systems that were monumentalized following the Enlightenment. So in short, the two very disturbing outcomes of structuralism and poststructuralism are that one challenged the agency of knowledge and the other, on the same principle, challenged the knowledge generated by such agency. But, when we reflect on the sources of such radical reversals by the structuralist and poststructuralist theories, we find them in the roots of the Indian philosophy of language. These were filtered to them, consciously or unconsciously, through Ferdinand de Saussure, who was a great scholar of Sanskrit linguistics.

Poststructuralist literary theory is basically grounded in the concept of language - that language creates the subject (self), that language either means more or less than what it says or it doesn't mean anything. All these conceptions of poststructuralism have their origin in a philosophy of language propounded by Ferdinand de Saussure. Saussure is to poststructuralism, what Vedic knowledge is to Sanskrit poetics. It is inconceivable that the Indian reservoir of insights in the philosophy of language did not seep through Saussure to the poststructuralists.

Saussure did his doctoral work on the genitive absolute in Sanskrit. Many of his fundamental ideas seem to have been influenced by Bhartrihari. His description of the word as a linguistic sign composed of two inseparable units - the signifier (sound image) and the signified (meaning) seems to be quite similar to the notion of the *sphota*. Structural linguistics, as propounded by Saussure, envisaged language as a vast, complex network of signs. Meanings emanate not from the human consciousness but from the broad, impersonal linguistic and semiological structures underlying the phenomenal world. Thus the emphasis shifted from the sovereign human self as the originary site of all knowledge, creativity and essence to linguistic structures. Consequently, the rational subject of Descartes (the *Cogito*) and the absolute subject of Hegel were dethroned.

Saussurean notion of Sign was questioned by the poststructuralist thinkers who prised apart its two inseparable units, thereby discovering the unstable nature of signification. The Deconstructionists asserted the unbridgeable chasm between the signifier and the signified and celebrated the fluidity of language. They viewed language as an endless stream of 'chameleon like' signifiers, pointing to nothing beyond themselves and leading to an eternal deferral of meaning. So language was denied any authenticity and meaning making capacity. All meanings supposedly derived from language were declared to be illusory. Nietzsche, whose influence on poststructuralist thought cannot be overestimated, had already declared truth (derived from language) as "a mobile army of metaphors, metonymies, anthropomorphisms, in short a sum of human relations which have been subjected to poetic and rhetorical intensification, translation and decoration..." (Nietzsche 146). For Paul de Man, one of the greatest practitioners of Deconstruction, language is the central metaphor, the 'metaphor of metaphors' (de Man) which originates in the void:

It is the distinctive curse of all language, as soon as any kind of interpretational relation is involved that it is forced to act this way. The simplest of wishes cannot express itself without hiding behind a screen of language that constitutes a world of intricate intersubjective relationships, all of them potentially inauthentic (de Man 11).

The deconstructionist view of language as being nebulous, devoid of any



authenticity and materiality is somewhat nihilistic and engenders many hermeneutical and exegetical problems. If language is completely immaterial and insubstantial, then what can account for the 'making' of meanings in the phenomenal, experiential world?

Jacques Lacan, the seminal poststructuralist thinker tried to provide an answer to this complex problem. For Lacan "...language is not immaterial. It is a subtle body, but body it is. Words are trapped in all the corporeal images, which captivate the subject" (Lacan 1968, 64).

Language, in Lacanian conceptualization is the site where human subjectivity is constructed. The Lacanian subject is a linguistic being, constructed through and positioned in language. The material and the conceptual world and all its meaning-making process reside in language since 'the unconscious is structured like language'.

Language is the dwelling-place of the unconscious. Being composed of floating signifiers, it is fluid, slippery and indeterminate. It is also 'pre-ontological' that is, it exists before existence. Man is born among signifiers which shape his experience and structure his relationships: "Before strictly human relations are established, certain relations have already been determined...Nature provides...signifiers and these signifiers organize human relations in a creative way, providing them with structures and shaping them" (Lacan 1979, 20).

The 'all-pervasive nature of language, the all-engulfing nature of symbols, the all-engendering nature of the word' (Sharma 5), in Lacan's conception reminds us of the tremendous ubiquity of the Goddess *Vak*: "I breathe a strong breath like the wind and tempest, the while I hold together all wind and tempest, Beyond this wide earth and beyond the heavens I have because so mighty in my grandeur" (*Rigveda* X/12, 5.8).

Since language is so unfathomable and opaque and yet so necessary to illuminate 'the dark island of subjectivity' (Sharma 1), it is a Herculean, if not Sisyphean task to interpret the word. It is here that Lacan draws insights from the *dhvani* theory, locating the primordial origin of all origins in already and ever-existing sound - in the resonance and reverberations that generate endless currents of meaning. In *Language of the Self* Lacan suggests the relationship between *dhvani* and the origination of sense:

In this regard, we could take note of what the Hindu tradition teaches about *dhvani*, in the sense that this tradition brings out that it is proper to the word to cause to be understood what it does not say. The tradition illustrates this by a tale whose ingeniousness, which appears to be the usual thing in these examples shows itself humorous enough to induce us to penetrate the truth, which it conceals (Lacan 1968, 34-35).

Most of the prominent theories of poststructuralism like Deconstruction, New Historicism, Psychoanalysis, and others derive their basic arguments from the premise that language is not a material sign, but, as Paul Ricoeur says, 'a living metaphor' that keeps on recreating its own significance. The material sign is defined by its signified and the signified is not stable. Its realization is dependent on many factors like the writer, the reader, and the context. These three keep on changing and thus rendering the signified as ever reverberating with all kinds of sounds, hues and images. It is here that the *dhvani* of language becomes the resonance of the signified that acquires the fluidity and magnificence of the sea-waters.

It is not for the first time that a discussion on the Indian traditions of language and



the Western poststructuralist thought has been attempted. Scholars like Lalita Pandit, Coward, K. Raja, Lehmann and others have already made literary and theoretical excursions into this immense area of knowledge. But these scholars have suggested the links and similarities which might have been the influencing factors on Western thought. However, what I have tried to do is a different argument altogether - it is not the similarities or links that we find between poststructuralist theory and *dhvani* theory, but a concrete evidence that the poststructuralist literary theory is rooted strongly in the philosophy of language which has borrowed from the ancient Indian philosophy of language, developed in *the Vedas*, *the Upanishads* and later nurtured by Sanskrit literary poetics like Anandvardhana and Abhinavagupta and others. The *dhvani* theory will make circumscribed and limited sense to anyone who does not delve into this thousands of years old Indian knowledge system. Two significant points are to be noted: 1) *Dhvani* theory is a philosophy of language which is deeply rooted into *the Vedas* and *Upanishads* and subsequently directly related to Bhartrihari's philosophy of language. 2) That tradition of physics and metaphysics of language has concretely influenced the poststructuralist thought as practised by Derrida, de Man, Lacan, and others. My submission is that when we read poststructuralism together with the Indian traditions that have enriched the poststructuralist theory, the Indian theories of language prove to be epistemologically more fruitful and more comprehensive, which are otherwise slighted as mystical and abstruse by the Western scholars. When we read them together, maybe new ideas will germinate and newer fields of knowledge may emerge to make a better sense of human experience which is so concretely available and yet so illusive, as the *Sabda* is.

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## Indian and Western Aesthetic Thinking: A Comparative Study

Shrawan K Sharma

A reader, while studying a text, feels thrilled, transported, at varying intervals. This experience involves two things: the first is beauty caused by the creative use of language, known as aesthetic beauty and the second is pleasure caused by beauty known as aesthetic pleasure which is experienced by the reader. He experiences this pleasure in two ways - haphazardly as a layman has it and methodically as a trained man does. Former has its worth as vague or even confused while the latter remains accounted for. It is the latter mode which requires aesthetic tools to analyze and relish literature. Some scholars may think that to relish literature, there is no need of aesthetic tools. They hold that the aesthetic tools hamper aesthetic experience because the reader is lost in a mechanical enquiry. This objection, no doubt, has a logic for one who is not a trained reader or who is not used to applying such tools to a literary piece. For a trained reader this objection has no value because for him such an enquiry is not a mechanical task but an assimilative character of technical and philosophical aspects which constitute the problem of aesthetics. In this regard Vamana (8th c.) in the second and third sutras of section two of his *Kavyalamakarasura* says that one who possesses discriminative intelligence needs aesthetic tools, for others these tools are of no use. (Vamana, 03) The present paper attempts to explore a significant area of intersection between Indian and Western aesthetic thinking, viz. their views on the problem of aesthetics of literature.

In Indian context, aesthetics means "the science and philosophy of fine art." It is science of fine art because the problem of art is originally a problem of technique of art. The works, wherein the philosophy of art is discussed, are primarily concerned with technique; and the philosophy is closely related to it. It is philosophy of fine art because the experience that a work of art arouses in a *sahrdaya* (reader/spectator) is accounted for in terms of different schools of philosophic thought in India and also because the authorities on three arts, poetry, music and architecture, hold that art presents the Absolute as conceived by them. In Western context, particularly from Hegelian point of view, aesthetics means "the philosophy of fine art" which seems to mean "a theory of beautiful in general, whether in art or in nature." (Pandey Vol. II; 1972, 01). But here it does not mean that Western aesthetics does not take into account the technique of fine art. Like Indian aesthetics, Western poetics also deals with the problem of technique comprehensively.

Reiterating the problem of aesthetics which includes two aspects of fine arts— the technique of fine arts and the philosophy or theory of fine arts—I begin with the technical point of view of the problem of aesthetics which is related to the possibilities of the creative use of language at different levels of a literary text. Its range is restricted to a text or an author. The whole field of aesthetics-Indian and Western— may be regarded as one continued attempt to unravel the mystery of beauty of poetic language. Both Indian and Western aestheticians have been aware of the creative possibilities pertaining to the language of literature. In a word, the language of literature is one of the much discussed issues in both Indian and Western aesthetics.



Indian *acharyas* (aestheticians) have made several exploratory, but penetrating contributions on many issues, having a distinct bearing on language in literature, that still confront modern scholars. Although they do not use the terminology of modern criticism, their formulations on language of literature are seminal. Anandavardhana, the greatest exponent of *dhvani siddhanta* (the theory of suggestion), declares that the ways of expressions are infinite and there is no end to poetic individuations. Rajashekhara says that the things described do not delight us in literature. It is the creative use of language only which either delights or disturbs us. Abhinavagupta believes that *kavya saundarya* (aesthetic beauty) ensues from formal and structural features of a composition. Indian *acharyas* (aestheticians) hold that a literary linguistic presentation possesses some element of art and represents an object as it figures in literary imagination. They add that it is this language that is capable of arousing the interest of a *sahridaya* (reader/spectator) and is sufficient for *saundaryanubhuti* (aesthetic experience) which may be *rasagatasaundarya* (experience caused by aesthetic sentiment), *alankaragatasaundarya* (experience caused by figures), *ritigatasaundarya* (experience caused by style), *dhvanigatasaundarya* (experience caused by suggestion), *vakroktigatasaundarya* (experience caused by oblique expression) and *aucityagatasaundarya* (experience caused by propriety). Accordingly, Indian *acharyas* (aestheticians) have examined the creative use of language from the standpoints of *rasa* (aesthetic sentiment), *alamkara* (figures), *riti* (style), *dhvani* (suggestion), *vakrokti* (oblique expression) and *aucitya* (propriety).

These standpoints can be classified under two heads on the basis of the common points they have. The first head includes *alankara* (figures), *riti* (style), *vakrokti* (oblique expression) and *aucitya* (propriety). They have common spectrum, dealing with,

1. the use of *varna* (phonetic aspects at varying and without intervals),
2. the use of *purvardhapada* (lexical aspects--suggestive words, synonyms, epithets, pronouns, adjectives, gender, indeclinable, verb),
3. the use of *parirdhapada* (grammatical aspects--transposition of tenses, numbers, persons, voices, affixes, particle),
4. the use of *vakya* or *vastu* (sentential or contextual aspects--nature of the subject, natural and imposed),
5. the use of *prakarana* (episodic aspects---emotional states, modified source of a particular event and episode, episodic relationship, dominant sentiment, play within a play, secondary episodes, junctures),
6. the use of *prabandha* (compositional aspects-- winding up the story, changing sentiment, intending end, title of the work, identical subject, contingent objects) (Sharma: 2004, 04)

The second head includes *rasa* (aesthetic sentiment) and *dhvani* (suggestion). The standpoint of *rasa* (aesthetic sentiment) is based on the four kinds of language--*aharya* (voluntary non-verbal language) to depict emotions/feelings of a character played by the actor, *vacika* (verbal language) to express emotions/feelings, tone, dialect, pitch of a particular character, *aharya* (costume and stage language) to enhance expression, *sattvika* (involuntary non-verbal language) expressed by the presence of tears, mark of horripilation, change of facial color, trembling of lips, enhancing



nostrils) etc. to express the deepest emotions of a character. As far as the standpoint of *dhvani* (suggestion) is concerned it is based on the three-fold division of meaning, emanating from threesome of *abdaakti* (word-powers)-*sabdasakti*--*abhidheyartha* or *vacyartha* (primary meaning), *laksana*--*laksyartha* (secondary or derivative meaning), and *vyanjana-vyangartha* or *dhvanyartha* (tertiary or suggested meaning).

In the West too there has been a marked awareness of the creative use of language. Aristotle in his *Poetics* talks of the creative use of language in poetry. The sixth, seventh and eighth chapters of *Poetics* are self-evident which are devoted to poetic diction. Aristotle's definition of tragedy:

Tragedy is an imitation of an action, that is serious, complete, and of a certain magnitude; in language embellished with each kind of artistic ornament, the several kinds being found in separate parts of the play; in the form of action not of narrative; through pity and fear effecting the proper catharsis, or purgation of these emotions (Butcher 1951, 240).

gives an account of the creative use of language. The "action," which comprises all human activities, including deeds, thoughts and feelings is non verbal expression. As has already been referred to, Bharata defines this *angika* (voluntary non-verbal language) and *satvikas* (involuntary non-verbal language). The creative use of language is also evident in the next important part of the definition which is "language embellished with each kind of artistic ornament". The other parts of definition--"serious, complete, and of a certain magnitude", "the several kinds being found in separate parts of the play" and the use of emotions-can also be included in the creative use of language. Kuntaka has included them in his prakaraa *vakrata* (episodic obliquity), one of the six kinds of *vakrokti* (oblique expression). William Wordsworth in his Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*, categorically talks about the nature of poetic language. He says that a poet should write poetry "in a selection of language really used by men, at the same time, to throw over them a certain colouring of imagination, whereby ordinary things should be presented to the mind in an unusual aspect." (Wordsworth and Coleridge 1968, 253). Commenting on the nature of language Shelley also says that poetry "strips the veil of familiarity from the world" (Saintsbury, George. *Loco critici*, "Shelley: Defence of Poetry", 400). Here Wordsworth and Shelley seem to be propagating the same ideas which the Russian Formalists advance after one hundred years.

In the recent decades, the writers, critics, linguists, philosophers, and stylisticians all have become conscious of the creative use of language of literature. To them style and formal features are important aspects for making an analysis and of working out of the meaning of a piece of literature. The structuralist theories of the West emphasize the study of language in order to make an assessment of a piece of literature and to relish it. According to these theories, literature is a specialized mode of language which is self focused and does not make extrinsic references. It offers a special kind of experience by drawing attention to its own formal features, excluding the subject matter and social values. Here the object of study is "literariness" which consists "in the maximum foregrounding of the utterance i.e. the foregrounding of 'the act of expression' the act of speech itself." The primary aim of literature in thus foregrounding its linguistic medium is to estrange or defamiliarise. The writer, by disrupting the mode of ordinary linguistic discourse, makes strange the ordinary world of every day perception and renews the readers' lost capacity for fresh sensation. The structuralists



stress the function of purely literary devices to produce the effect of freshness in reader's sensation. The foregrounding properties or artistic devices are deviations from ordinary language. The contemporary literary theories have the following spectrum at various levels:

Segmental level: includes the following aspects of language

1. Phonemic level of organization (patterns of speech sounds, Alliteration, onomatopoeia, sound symbolism or phonetic intensives meter or rhyme);
2. Morphemic level of organization (words and their prefix and suffix); and
3. Lexical level of organization (dictional aspects of language).

Suprasegmental level: includes the following features of language

1. Stress;
2. Juncture; and
3. Intonation.

Syntactic level: includes the following features of language

1. Combination of words, phrases, clauses and sentences;
2. Paradigmatic relations (vertical relations between a single word in a sentence and other words that are phonologically, syntactically and semantically similar and which can be substituted for it);
3. Syntagmatic relations (horizontal relations which determine the possibilities of putting words in a sequence so as to make a well-formed syntactic unit);
4. Surface structure of a set of "kernel sentences"; and
5. Deep structure of a set of "kernel sentences". (Abrams 1999)

Thus there is a conspicuous correspondence between the above mentioned formulations of Indian and Western aesthetic thinking from the point of view technique. Both Indian and Western thinking shows that literature embodies a significant aspect of human experience in the stylized linguistic form. It carves out of language a pattern and its verbal substructure embodies a carefully modified linguistic system. It is more structured and creative than the every day language. Literature in the context of both Indian and Western thinking a certain obliqueness is the most distinguishing characteristic of language. They have similar pronouncements, though the pronouncements of latter are not so exhaustive as those of the former ones.

Let us now take up the second aspect of aesthetics i.e. the philosophy of aesthetics involved in the function of literature, in poet's nature and in the experience of aesthetic pleasure of reader/spectator, which is the theoretical side of aesthetics. Its range is very wide which includes metaphysical, psychological, epistemic, logical and other points of view. In the West the hedonistic, moralistic or pedagogic and philosophical theories represent the study of the problem from the point of view of the end of art; the theories of imitation, illusion, and idealized representation represent a study from the point of view of the artist; and the theories of confused cognition, inference and mysticism represent a study of the problem from the point of view of the reader.



spectator/aesthete. These theories have been propounded on the basis of architecture, sculpture, painting, music, poetry and drama. In Indian aesthetics, there are three schools: i *Rasa-Brahma-vada* (school dealing with the experience of absolute in literature) ii *Nad-Brahma-vada* (school dealing with the experience of absolute in music. iii *Vastu-Brahma-vada* (school dealing with the experience of absolute in architecture). These theories have been propounded on the basis of the dynamics of dramatic art. The reason is that Bharata gives all other arts subordinate position to dramatic art. He holds that a dramatic presentation includes all lore, experience, spiritual discipline, science, art (fine and mechanical), craft and object. But the authorities on *Nad-Brahma-vada* (school dealing with the experience of absolute in music and *Vastu-Brahma-vada* (school dealing with the experience of absolute in architecture) assert the independence of these two arts (music and architecture) in giving rise to *kavyanand* or *rasanubhuti* (the aesthetic experience). Indian *acharyas* (aestheticians) do not recognize sculpture and painting as independent fine arts. (Pandey Vol. I: 1995, 01). Although both Indian and Western aesthetics have different terminology and canvas yet their range and approaches have a conspicuous relationship. They raise many subtle questions to represent a study of the problem from the point of view of the end of art, from the point of view of the artist and from the point of view of the reader/spectator.

### The problem of aesthetics from the point of view of the end of art:

As has already been referred to, the problem of aesthetics from the point of view of the end of art includes Plato's hedonistic, Aristotle's moralistic or pedagogic and Plotinus's philosophical theories. In this regard the discussion generally starts with Plato because it was he who initiated the discussion. But it is interesting to note that Socrates (499-399 BC), had already showed his concerns about the end of art. In the tenth chapter of *Memorabilia* : *Xenophone*, Socrates's interaction with Parrhasius and Cleito unfolds the function of literature. He asks Parrhasius:

1. "Do you think that people look with more pleasure on paintings, in which beautiful and good and lovely characters are exhibited?"
2. "Does not the representation of passions of men, engaged in any act, excite a certain pleasure in the spectators?"

Then he asks Cleito:

- 3 "How do you put into your statues that which most wins the minds of the beholders?" (*Memorabilia of Socrates* : *Xenophon*, Ch.X).

In the *Republic* Plato (427-347BC) does not consider art (literature) affording a pleasure of higher order because it is the product of something which is twice removed from reality. But in the *Laws*, Book II he seems to modify his view. Here he seems to approve pleasure as the function of arts if it encourages moral values in people. It is because of this approach Plato's theory is known as rigorous hedonism.

Aristotle (384-322 BC) improves upon Plato's approach to the problem and moves in the direction of Bharata. The aesthetic facts, on which his theory flourishes, are not the products of pictorial, plastic, sculpture or architectural art but those of the poetic in general and tragedy in particular. He sums up his aesthetics in his definition of tragedy in which he touches upon all the issues taken up by Plato.<sup>1</sup> He, improving upon the aesthetic theory of his teacher by raising art from the sphere of sensuality to that of morality, asserts that imitation in art does not consist in the faithful



representation of objects as they are actually found in nature. This representation is not a mere shadow of the ideal world. It is not merely a world of appearances. It is not merely lifeless matter, on which the ideas are impressed, as Plato holds. According to Aristotle, it is a real world of form and matter. It consists in idealization. This view envisages that literature not only tells the reader something but does something to him. It is a kind of pleasure that works almost a sea change and leaves upon the reader a permanent effect. He is not the same person after reading the poem that he was before.

Later Plotinus (204-269) improves upon the Aristotelian position. He, occupied himself with the end of art, takes up the problem of experience, for which art is responsible. He attempts the problem from metaphysical, psychological, epistemological points of view. According to him, the experience that a work of art arouses in the aesthete is beyond the emotional level, it belongs to the transcendental and the spiritual level. Katharsis, according to him, refers not to emotions but to the soul itself. It consists in detaching the soul from the body, and elevating it to the spiritual world. It consists in freeing it from all impurities, and attaining the purity of spirit. It consists in purifying the soul from all its lower nature and external stains. Thus he gives a mystic explanation of aesthetic experience. In Indian aesthetics this approach to art is known as *kavyapryojana* (the function of literature). In his *Nayasastra*, Bharata (5thc.) holds that dramatic presentation primarily aims at giving rise to *rasa* (aesthetic pleasure) in the aesthete and later this experience is followed by moral improvement. The disciples of Bharata, after witnessing the drama and analyzing the effect it has on them, realize that it brings about identification with the focus of the dramatic situation, to the effect that the audience realize through experience (because of generalization) that the familiar recognized objects or four ends of life, *dharma*, *artha*, *kama*, *moksha* (righteousness, worldly possessions, desires, salvation) ought to be pursued.<sup>2</sup>

Here it is important to note that to Aristotle the experience of emotion is only emotive experience, the experience of emotion at a high pitch and the end of art is the production of the "mean" i.e. harmony. But in Indian context it is a philosophical experience. It is because of this philosophic nature of aesthetic experience Indian aestheticians consider this experience as *brahmanandasahodara* (uterine brother of divine pleasure), one of the three kinds of *anand* (pleasure), the other two being the *visayanand* (worldly pleasure) and the *paramanand* or *Brahmanand* (permanent or divine pleasure). Of these, *visayanand* (worldly pleasure) is related to the satisfaction of the material appetites and stands at the lowermost rung of the ladder; *Paramanand* or *Brahmanand* (divine pleasure) is related to the attainment of Communion with the *Brahma* (Absolute Being) and occupies the topmost status; and *kavyanand* (aesthetic pleasure) falls intermediate between the two. During the course of this experience, the various powers—*abhidha* (primary meaning), *lakṣna* (secondary meaning), and *vyangya* (suggestive meaning) and *śabda* (verbal testimony) itself becomes *Brahma* (the Absolute Being). It creates a temporary state of bliss in the *sahridaya* (the reader / spectator) which helps him in having an impersonalized and ineffable judgment. It is because of this experience that *kavyajagat* (the world of poetry) is different from *jagat* (the human world). It is noteworthy that unlike the world of poetry, the human world lacks this experience. There is only either *sukh* or *dukh* (pleasure or pain) in the experience of the world. The *kavyanand* (aesthetic pleasure) is above the experience of pleasure and pain caused by the worldly experiences of life. It is remarkable to note that even the unpleasant emotions become pleasurable in poetry.



### The problem of aesthetics from the point of view of the artist:

As far as the problem of aesthetics from the point of the artist is concerned it has also been studied both in Western and Indian aesthetics. It has been studied in the light of the theories of imitation, illusion, and idealized representation. In Western aesthetics it is the theory of mimesis or imitation, which provides a basis for the problem. Later the successive writers alter or modify it. Sophist Gorgias (470 BC) uses imitation as illusion. He holds, "tragic representation is a deception, which turns out to the honour of both, of him who deceives and of him who is deceived, in which it is shameful not to know how to deceive oneself and not to let oneself be deceived." (Croce, Benedetto. *Aesthetics*, 158.) Socrates (499-399 BC), interacting with Parrhasius, a painter, Cleito, a statuary and Pistias, a corselet maker, understands it as selective imitation which means the combination of beautiful points in different objects of direct perception. (*Memorabilia of Socrates: Xenophon*, Ch X). To him imitation means to copy the states of mind in terms of expressions or physical changes which Bharata has called *anubh'va* (the voluntary physical changes). Plato's concept of imitation is intimately bound up with what is called his theory of ideas. According to him, ideas are the ultimate reality. Things are conceived as ideas before they take practical shape as things. The idea of everything is its original pattern, and the thing itself its copy. As the copy ever falls short of the original, it is once removed from reality. As far as literature is concerned, it reproduces things in words. The objective world, according to Plato, is nothing but reflection of the world of ideas and a product of art. This means that according to Plato, literature merely copies a copy and hence it is twice removed from reality.

In Indian aesthetics the problem of aesthetics from the point of the artist has also been studied by different aestheticians in their own ways. Bharata, the earliest available authority on aesthetics, deals with the problem on the lines of imitation, calling the artistic process as '*anukarna*' or *anukrtan* (imitation). Bhaa Lollaa studies the problem in the light of the theory of illusion. According to him art creates illusion on the stage by of its skilful representation of what appears in poet's imagination. Like many of the Western aestheticians he says that just as the illusory knowledge of any imitation of an object gives a momentary effect of the real object so does the objective perception of the stage representation of the historic for a moment. But latter aestheticians do not accept this explanation. They accept Bharata's view of *anukarna* or *anukartan* (imitation) and explain in relation to aesthetic objects. Abhinavagupta holds that aesthetic configurations are not imitation or the products of nature. (Abhinavagupta, *Abhinavabharat*", Vol, I, 274). They are the creations of art which do not imitate but reproduce a poetic vision in all possible details. If the word imitation implies the production of a mere shadow or exterior, which lacks the substance of the original, the aesthetic object is not the product of imitation. If the aesthetic object lacks the psychic states, the causes of physical and facial changes, the aesthetic object ceases to be aesthetic object. It would not be in the fitness of things to class the aesthetic object, as presented by Bharata, with any object found in the world. We cannot treat the aesthetic object for it is not the result of nature. We cannot treat the aesthetic object as unreal also for it has its own existential value. Again we cannot treat the aesthetic object as illusory for it is what it appears to be. In fact this object has its independent existence in its own world--the aesthetic world-- different from the world of daily life.

The aesthetic world of the artist/poet, as mentioned above, takes place at psycho-physical level. It is possible through *anugraha* (grace), one the five states of the process of composition, the other four being *srsti* (creation), *stithi* (preservation), *sanhar*

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(transformation) and *tirobhava* (diffusion). Here *srsti* (creation) is aesthetic intuition that charges the poet; *stithi* (preservation) denotes object of inspiration which captivates the mind of the poet; *sanhar* (transformation) is indication of expression which is the depth of the poet; *tirobhava* (diffusion) is resulting stimulation which diffuses illusion, and finally *anugraha* (grace) is the manifestation of the universal rhythm. A poetic composition, which has this universal rhythm activated by *anugraha* (grace), offers truth, meaning and imparts aesthetic pleasure. The experience of universal rhythm is the poet's conscious state of *niruddha* (meditative i.e. the state of total stillness), one of the five states of the mind, the other four being, *ksipt* (sensitive and agitative), *mudh* (insensitive and dull), *vikshipt* (interruptive and disturbed) and *ekagra* (concentrative and pointed). The mind shifts over from one state to another at a fast speed. Sometimes it is *ksipt* (sensitive and agitative), sometimes *mudh* (insensitive and dull), sometimes *vikshipt* (interruptive and disturbed), sometimes *ekagra* (concentrative and pointed) and sometimes *niruddha* (meditative i.e. the state of total stillness). Of the five, *niruddha* (meditative i.e. the state of total stillness) is the highest. It can further be divided into two sub-states: *samprajñata* (conscious) and *asamprajñata* (trans-conscious) *Parivrajaka* 1997, 65). Here the second state is the final state of a yogi, in which he becomes thoughtless. As far as the first state is concerned, it is the state of a poet which makes him concentrate his mind on both gross and subtle elements of nature (earth, water, light etc.) It is the state of realization of universal rhythm. It enables him to know the real nature and character of various objects and materials of Nature. It also enables him to achieve his purpose for himself and society. This realization of universal rhythm which makes one a poet is impregnated with imagination, sympathy and sensitivity.

Plato also says that the poet should be impregnated with recent initiation; he should be free from corrupting influence. Like *anugraha* (grace) these qualities of a poet also take place at psycho-physical level. A poet, impregnated with these qualities, Plato (in *Phaedrus*, 410) holds, is "amazed" at the sight of god-like form, an expression or imitation of divine beauty. Now "shudder" runs through him and some "misgiving of a former world steals over him. Then the shudder passes over into an unusual heat and perspiration. During this process the whole soul is in a state of "effervescence and irritation." As the soul looks at the beautiful on the earth she receives the sensible warm traction of particles, which flow towards her and therefore are called attraction. With this attraction she is refreshed and so "ceases from her pain with joy." This is the sweetest of all pleasures at the time. Plato in *Apology*, says that a poet writes poetry not by wisdom or the knowledge of the rules but by a sort of genius or inspiration. It is God that speaks through him. He is only the interpreter of God by whom he is several times possessed. His personality is completely transformed. He is utterly forgetful of himself. He does not even know the meaning of what he says. He has no consciousness of the physical level. According to Plato, a poet has ecstasy of the lover of the beautiful, one of the four types of ecstasy, the other three being the prophetic madness, ecstasy of the worshipper and poetic ecstasy. This poetic ecstasy is the extraordinary quality of the poet. He is a winged soul which has seen most truth. In other words, he has a soul which has seen most truth; he is born as a philosopher or an artist. But the soul, which has seen the truth in the sixth degree, is born as imitator. Aristotle does not accept this difference. He holds that a poet is like a grown up child and he imitates truth in the highest degree. It is he who is the lover of the beautiful in art. He sees the beautiful on the earth and is transported with the recollection of the true beauty, which he experienced while he was in the company of gods. Everybody does not recall this true



beauty because he might have had some evil or corrupting influences on him. Thus this happens only when soul does not have corrupting influence.

### The problem from the point of view of the spectator/reader:

Both Indian and Western aestheticians pay due importance to the reader/spectator/as the aesthetic object is all for him. The problem of aesthetics studied from the point of view of the spectator/reader includes the theories of confused cognition, inference and mysticism. In the West once again the credit of initiating the problem in the present context goes to Plato. Defining the nature of the poet, the actor and the spectator, Plato holds that the spectator has lesser degree of possession in comparison to that of the poet and the actor. He categorically says that the poet is best possessed, less is the actor and still less is the spectator. The actor, being constraint to act, is not utterly forgetful of himself like poet. But at times he is carried out of himself. His soul is in ecstasy and seems to live among the persons or in places of which he speaks or which the scenic arrangements on the stage represent. Now there are changes in the reader/spectator in accordance with the context. The reader/spectator undergoes the same experience and effect. It is the effect of contemplation on beautiful in the world of art which is the effect of direct inspiration.

In Indian tradition, a *sahrdaya* (reader/spectator) is supposed to bear the nature of poet, which enables him to experience *rasa* (aesthetic pleasure). According to Indian *acharyas* (aestheticians), *sahrdaya* (reader/spectator) should have the basic receptivity to attune himself to the level of the poet. If his heart is at par with the imaginative mind of the poet or dramatist, he can experience *rasa* (aesthetic pleasure). He should share in Arnold's words the "sad lucidity of soul". Unless the *sahrdaya* (reader/spectator) has an adequate degree of intellectual and emotional equipment, he may not be able to establish that rapport with the poet, which is essential for the realization of *rasa* (aesthetic pleasure). The *sahrdaya* (reader/spectator) must have *samanadharma* (the nature of the poet himself). In their nature there may be a difference of degree, but not of kind, in sensitivity and capacity for imaginative contemplation. The word "*sahrdaya*" itself which has two components-"*sa*" (same) and "*sahrdaya*" (heart) - is self-evident in denoting the nature of the *sahrdaya* (reader/spectator/aesthete). Explaining *sahrdaya* (reader/spectator/aesthete), Abhinavagupta remarks that one can acquire this nature by constant practice of reading *kavya* (poetry) also.

In the twenty seventh chapter of the *Natyasastra*, Bharata gives a detailed account of the qualification of a *samajika* (spectator). This qualification includes the following subjective conditions. According to him, the spectator should have the capacity of concentration, the power of quick understanding, the capacity to maintain impartial attitude, interest in the presentation and the capacity to identify with human focus of the situation. Besides these conditions, there are other important conditions also which include the age, the inborn tendencies, and the psycho-physical conditions at the time of witnessing a dramatic performance. It is impossible for one to attune oneself to the heart of the poet if one is not *savasana* (one who has instincts or impressions) which are of two types-*idantini* (instincts or impressions related to the past lives) and *praptakalik* (instincts or impressions of the present life). Abhinavagupta holds that *sthayibhavas* (basic mental states or basic sentiments) reside inherently in the human *citta* (mind) in the form of *vasana* (instincts or impression). They remain dormant in the mind of every human being. They are even carried forward to subsequent births. These instincts or impressions and the universal sympathy enable the one to have



aesthetic experience. The contact of the mind with the *vibhavas* (causes and determinants of the rise of a sentiment) etc., will result in the manifestation of the *rasa* (aesthetic pleasure). A child has *vasana* (instincts or impression) related to the past lives but the *vasanas* (instincts or impression) of this life have not developed in him fully so far. They remain dormant in his mind. Hence he cannot have aesthetic experience. It is also noteworthy here that every individual spectator who has above average qualification, cannot have aesthetic experience from every aesthetic presentation. For instance an old man may not have the aesthetic experience, the basic mental state which is youthful love. Similarly a coward at heart may not relish a heroic emotion.

As has already been referred to, the problem of aesthetics from the point of view of the spectator / reader / aesthete has been studied both in Indian and Western aesthetics as psycho-epistemic experience. Aristotle keenly shows the effects of tragedy on the audience. He holds that the results which are near at hand only excite emotions. The results of past and distant future fail to excite emotions with the same intensity. In dramatic presentation the actors evoke the characters or events with the help of gestures, voice dress and acting have greater effect in exciting emotion. The simple reason is that now the event or character appears close at hand. In his aesthetics, Aristotle holds like Bharata that tragedy brings about the moral improvement of the spectator not through sermons, put in the mouth of important characters, but through effecting a katharsis of the emotions, through bringing about a purgation of the excessive emotions, through freeing the emotions from the unwanted and thus producing harmony among them. The simple reason is that now the event or character appears close at hand. The views of Aristotle and Plotinus regarding the effect of tragedy on the reader / spectator have been expressed by Bharata in his *Natyasastra*. He holds that in a dramatic presentation the actors with the help of *angika* (voluntary non-verbal language) *vacika* (verbal language), *aharya* (costume and stage language), *sattvika* (involuntary non-verbal language) respectively depict emotions / feelings of a character being played by him, express emotions / feelings, tone, diction, pitch of a particular character, enhance expression, express the deepest emotions of a character. Considering this matrix as the foregrounding of emotion, he says that "*vibhavanubhavavyabhicnrisa,yogata rasaninapattih*" which means that the savouring of the emotion is possible through the combination or integration of the following elements: *vibhava* (causes and determinants of the rise of an emotion) *anubhava* (gesture expressive of what is going on in the heart or the mind of main characters), *vyabhicaribhavas* (transitory emotions which go along with and consequently reinforce the prevailing mood or emotional disposition). (Bharata: 1950, 31).

One thing is noteworthy here that Bhaa Lollaa as has been referred to, alters Bharata's theory of imitation and takes it to mean illusion. Thereafter Sankuka modifies it to mean inference. He approaches the problem from psych-epistemic point of view. He explains the nature of response to the aesthetic object or actor on the basis of the role of *jñāna* (knowledge) in the experience of the *sahridaya* (reader / spectator / aesthete). He holds that there are four kinds of *jñāna* (knowledge) familiar in worldly experience. The first is *samyaka jñāna* (exact knowledge) in which there is absolute certainty as to the object of knowledge. The second is *mitthya jñāna* (false knowledge) in which the actual object of knowledge is repudiated. The third is *sanasya jñāna* (doubtful knowledge) in which there is no definite apprehension of the object of knowledge. The fourth is *samanyajñāna* (resemblant knowledge) in which resemblance of the object of knowledge is recognized in another object. In a poetic composition, these four kinds of knowledge



fail to explain the nature of aesthetic experience. In order to explain the nature of aesthetic experience, Sankuka has pressed into service the analogy of the *citraturanga-nyaya* (the picture-horse logic). (Tewary, 1984, 19-20). He holds that looking at the picture of a horse, one does not assume that it is a real horse; one does not fail to understand that it is a horse; one does not, further, harbour any doubt whether it is a horse; and likewise, one does not think that it resembles a horse. All that suggests that, despite the perception of the picture-horse not confronting to any of the four types of knowledge, it strikes as real or living and thus creates delight in us. Accordingly, the *sahrdaya* or *samajika* (reader /spectator) comes to regard the aesthetic object/ actor/ character as the real hero and associates *rasa* (aesthetic sentiment) with him on the line of *citraturanga-nyaya* (the picture-horse logic). That is the secret of his aesthetic experience.

In this process of aesthetic experience, the *sahrdaya* (reader/spectator) undergoes a change and as a result turns from *laukik* (worldly) into *alaukik* (supra-human) and hence now he experiences aesthetic pleasure even in weeping. Here it is noteworthy that the reader /spectator transcends the world but does not enter into a divine world. Here *citta* (psyche/mind) has two states: *dehti* (state of luminosity) and *pighalana* (state of liquefaction). The former state arouses the *rasas* (aesthetic sentiments) of *bhayanaka* (the terrible), *veera* (the heroic), *hasya* (the comic) etc. while the latter arouses *karunarasa* (sentiment of pathos), *shringararasa* (erotic sentiment) etc. It is noteworthy here that *citta* (psyche/mind) which is like sealing wax, gets melted due to heat and finally turns into a liquid form. Now *rajas* (mode of passion) and *tamas* (mode of dullness) are also liquefied and so *citta* (psyche/mind) experiences universal rhythm followed by *rasa* (aesthetic pleasure). Now *citta* (psyche/mind) transcends the worldly limits. It is *rajas* (mode of passion) and *tamas* (mode of dullness) that make *citta* (psyche/mind) have different experiences of life. They limit the realization of *citta* (psyche/mind) but the moment these *gunas* (modes) are melted, the limitations of *citta* (psyche/mind) are removed and we have *rasa* (aesthetic pleasure). The liquefaction of *citta* (psyche/mind) takes place after *rajas* (mode of passion) and *tamas* (mode of dullness) get subdued for the time being, affording scope for the *sattva* (mode of goodness) to inundate the inner consciousness. This happens internally, imperceptibly, without letting the *sahrdaya* (reader/spectator) realize the subtle stages of liquefaction. Thus this aesthetic experience is *bhagnavarana-cittavastha* (a state of cumulative experience of mind). It creates internal repose which is accompanied with aesthetic experience.

It is interesting to note that we take delight in seeing the imitations not only of those, the sight of which pleasing, but also of those the sight of which is painful or dreadful or loathsome. The reason for delight is the learning or the extension of knowledge. It is equally delightful to both a philosopher and a layman. It is by the means of imitative production we are able to get the knowledge of the external realities which may, under the circumstances, not be otherwise possible. The consciousness that the object present before us is an imitation frees from the horrible and the disgusting elements. Hence the imitations of the disgusting are also possible. Viswanatha holds that the unpleasant sentiments in life produce grief due to association with material world, but they become *alaukika* (supra-human) as a result of association with aesthetic world. It is further to say that the situations of life and the situations as delineated in poetry fundamentally differ in taste and complexion. Poetry has its own culture and its characteristics. The sentiment of life undergoes a type of processing in poetry, resulting into sublimity. Plato describes the reason of taking pleasure/delight in his own way by exemplifying



it from a tragedy. He holds that every man takes delight not in watching a tragedy but in sympathizing with the sufferer. He says that man has natural desire to relieve his sorrow by giving free expression to it in tears and cries. But due to embarrassment in society, he checks it. At the sight of a tragedy, there is no embarrassment in relieving his sorrow by giving free expression to it in tears and cries. Here delight is due to the feeling of relief caused by the free play of natural desire which is restricted in day today life.

Abhinavagupta holds that through *sadharanikarana* (generalization) the reader transcends his subjective, objective and neutral states and has *ekabhava* (single sentiment). Here *vibhava* (causes and determinants of the rise of a sentiment), *anubhava* (the visible effects or gestures) and *vyabharibhavas* (the transitory emotions) and *sthayebhavas* (basic mental states or basic sentiments), all abandon their local individual or temporal associations or limitations and acquire a sort of *sadharanikarana* (generalization) rather universalization. Accordingly, the *sthayebhava* (basic mental state or basic sentiment) becomes the respected sentiment of ordinary men and women. It is after this *sadharanikarana* (generalization) has taken place in the mind of the *sahridaya* (reader or spectator) that the aesthetic experience takes place, giving rise to repose in the mind of the reader. This is a progression from *laukika* (worldly) to *alaukika* (supra-human). Unlike Abhinavagupta, Sankuka holds that *rasa* (aesthetic pleasure) is not produced, but inferred by the spectator. The permanent mood of the hero is inferred to exist in the actor and sensed by the spectator which develops into the relishability of *rasa* (aesthetic sentiment). This logical process of inference leads to *rasanubhuti* (aesthetic experience).

Thus there is also a conspicuous correspondence between the above mentioned formulations of Indian and Western aesthetics from the point of view of the second aspect of aesthetic i.e. philosophy involved in the experience of aesthetic pleasure.

To conclude, both Indian and Western aestheticians deal with the problem of aesthetics from technical, metaphysical, psychological, epistemic, logical and critical points of view. They have similar pronouncements from the point of philosophy though the pronouncements of the western aesthetics are not so exhaustive as those of the Indian aesthetics. Despite differences in their priorities and approaches, they treat the same aesthetic phenomenon in literature. In certain respects, Indian aesthetics is more comprehensive and striking than the Western aesthetics. Unlike the Western aesthetics, the Indian aesthetics pays due attention to the connoisseur's reaction to a piece of literature. By erecting their theoretical edifice on the firm foundation of poetic activity, the Indian *acaryas* (aestheticians) have given a more convincing explanation of the questions regarding the technique and philosophy of fine arts which constitute the problem of aesthetics.

### Notes

1The problem of aesthetics as dealt with by Plato as a whole concentrates on the following points: What does art present?, How does art present it? What is the effect of art on the spectator? What is the essential nature of the product of art?, How does a painful element become pleasurable?, and what are the aesthetic facts on which the theory is based?

2The other aestheticians also accept Bharata's view and hold that poetry improves her lover morally like a curtain lecture which is more effective than a hundred sermons.



Bhamah (6thc.) states that *kavya* (poetry) promotes *purusarthas* (four ends of life)-*dharma*, *artha*, *kama*, *moksha* (righteousness, worldly possessions, desires, salvation). He mentions *keerti* and *preti* also in the sense of aesthetic pleasure as *kavyaprayojana* (the purpose of poetry). Vamana (8thc.) uses *preti* in the sense of aesthetic pleasure as one of the purposes of poetry, the other being *keerti* (the reputation). Mammata (10thc.), describing explicitly the purpose of poetry, says that poetry is for attaining *yasha* (fame), *artha* (wealth), *vyavahara* (practical knowledge), *ivetakranti* (destruction of evil), *sadyah paramanand* (aesthetic pleasure), and for attaining *kanta* (instructions). Of these six purposes or functions of poetry, described in the verse, the first four are applicable to the poet while the remaining two apply to the reader. Like Bhamaha and Vamana, Anandavardhana (9thc.) and Abhinavagupta (10th c.-11th c.) and Panditaraja Jagannatha (16th c.) talk of *preti* in the sense of aesthetic pleasure as one of the purposes of poetry. Rajsekshara (10thc.) in his treatise also holds *anand* (aesthetic pleasure) as the purpose of poetry.

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# The Idea of Decorum in Indian and Western Poetics

Khandakar Shahin Ahmed

Mridula Kashyap

As a principle of propriety and appropriateness the validity of decorum is not confined to one period. It has both aesthetic and moral considerations, as a criterion of right relationship whether between style and subject matter or in the fulfillment of social obligations. Not only did decorum have a respectable ancestry both in Western and Indian poetics, but its validity as a critical concept seems unquestionable. Here it is sought to demonstrate this by an examination of the basic assumptions of this doctrine as discussed by Indian and Western theorists. The question of decorum is crucial to literary criticism as it raises fundamental questions with regard to the language of poetry and poetic semantics, criteria for the judgment of literature, and even questions involving the philosophical language.

In the Western criticism the concept of decorum goes back to Aristotle. In his *Rhetoric* Aristotle assumes the decorum of rhetorical efficacy in discussing the appropriateness of style to the theme, and in *Poetics* he assumes the mimetic decorum with regard to the various kinds of imitation that he discusses, like tragedy, epic, comedy etc. In the discussion of the conditions of successful oratory, Cicero, like Aristotle, focuses on the fact that the purpose of the orator being broadly to teach, to delight and to move, his style must be a combination of different kinds to suit the different purposes; simple for teaching, coloured yet restrained for delight and sublime for moving men's emotions. In other words, the style must be in accordance with the aim it is intended to serve. The idea naturally leads on to the discussion of decorum. The methods employed are the outcome of the principle of decorum which became in course of time the all-embracing critical doctrine of Roman criticism. Cicero says that a perfect orator should speak in whatever style the case may demand. He must only observe propriety in his work as a whole as well as in parts thereof. There must be a perfect correspondence between the subject matter and the style, or the matter and the manner at every stage. Cicero also quotes approvingly the dictum of the actor Roscius who said that a sense of fitness is the most important thing in art, although that is something which cannot be taught. To put it in a broader perspective the idea of decorum is actually a matter that fully concerns the sensibility of a person. In art we only apply what is essentially relevant to life. Decorum thus is a principle of life transferred to art. Cicero then discusses style, and there, too, the guiding principle is decorum or propriety. What Cicero says in this connection would at once remind one of Wordsworth's theories of poetic diction propounded a few centuries later. Cicero says that a good style is one that is based on a choice of fit words, that is words selected from the language actually used by men, not a separate jargon; words that are free from commonplace elements and yet words that comprise unusual forms and metaphors to give elevation and colour to the effect. Words in a certain combination produce a certain kind of effect. According to Cicero, the words must be chosen in a way that they sound well and have a harmony and produce pleasure. Cicero analyses the style of many orators and, almost in a manner of practical criticism, points out their distinctive features and their effectiveness in fulfilling the purpose they are intended to serve. An orator has to appeal to many persons at a time, and the ears of the people are the instruments on which the orator has to play. Moreover, the artistic

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appeal must be felt naturally. In this connection Cicero makes a statement the echoes of which would reverberate for centuries in the West, and would find its approval in the East as well. Cicero says "Art being derived from nature seems to have affected nothing at all, if it does not move and delight naturally" (De Oratore III 197. In Atkins II 39). Cicero is never tired of insisting that works of literature and oratory are not isolated phenomena, but are intimately, almost symbiotically related to one another. He also shows original insight when he says that every age has its peculiar style of speaking and suggests the relativity of aesthetic standards.

It was during the time of Horace, that is, during the Augustan period, that a fresh dignity was accorded to decorum. Although Horace never used the word decorum in his *Ars Poetica*, his chief doctrine was literary propriety. The favorite passage for his modern disciples was from lines 89 to 127, wherein Horace argued that each style should keep its proper place since a speaker's words should never be discordant with his station. He argued that it makes a great difference in who is speaking, whether god or a hero or a slave, an old man or a youth, a great lady or a nurse, a merchant or a plowman, an Assyrian or a Greek. He, moreover, pointed out that comic themes are distinct from tragic, and the two should never, or very rarely, be mingled. Horace is the most important exponent of Roman criticism. But there is no need to discuss all his ideas or contributions to criticism for our purpose.

In *Ars Poetica*, Horace discusses poetry under three heads: *poesis* or the subject-matter (II 1-41), *poema* or form (II 42-294) and *poeta* or the poet (II 295-476). In the very opening section Horace talks about the need of organic unity and propriety (II 1-3). After a brief note on the arrangement of material he proceeds to deal in detail with poetic style or expression commenting in detail on the proper choice of poetic diction or arrangement of words particularly in metrical form and finally on style or tone appropriate to the different dramatic genres and characters. Concerning the function of poetry Horace says that the poet's function is either to improve or to give delight or again to combine both the aims. The combination of the effect will be utilitarian and hedonistic. But for Horace the poetic style calls for proper choice of words and the arrangement in composition and metrical form. This is the law of decorum or literary propriety or appropriateness. If Horace's idea of decorum which partly harks back to Cicero and at the same time has an affinity with Ksemendra's theory of *Aucitya*, his views on the aesthetic side of poetry, the nature of the pleasure aimed, at once calls to our mind the Indian theory of poetry and poetic pleasure.

The concept of *Aucitya* or propriety is actually touched upon by all the poeticists in one way or the other. It is discussed by the exponents of the schools of *Dhvani*, *Riti* and others. This is in the fitness of things, because propriety has to be an important concern for all the theorists who are interested in the ideal kind of poetry. For the exponents of *Alamkara* it is supremely important that the right figure of speech is used to convey the particular kind of perception. Similarly unless there is propriety *Rasa* cannot be generated. The same is true about *Riti* or style and deviation or *Vakrokti*. Thus, the concept of propriety embraces all the schools and all the aspects of poetry, the texture and the structure, the meaning and the music, the symbols and the images, the diction and the character etc. The *Bhavas* must be delineated according to the characters represented. And the style and diction must be according to the cultural level of a particular character.

However, it is Ksemendra who develops *Aucitya* as a consistent theory and



is, therefore, regarded as the most important exponent of *Aucitya*. In his theory of *Aucitya* or propriety he takes as his thesis the treatment by Anandavardhana of the question of propriety in relation to *Rasa*. In the Indian Poetics it is said that there is no other circumstance which leads to the violation of *Rasa* than impropriety; the supreme secret of *Rasa* consists in observing the established rules of propriety. *Rasa* can never be created or even depicted unless there is an intelligent and alert attention to the established rules of propriety. The idea was also suggested by Bharata though very briefly, almost in passing, where he speaks of the proper employment of *Anubhavas*. Bharata says that a subject may take different forms depending on the nature of the subject matter, the character of the speaker, the nature of the sentiment evoked or the means by which it is evoked. All those who discuss *Dhvani* theory discuss propriety. Anandavardhana, in fact, offers elaborate rules for avoiding *Anaucitya* in episodes and whole works. Kuntaka shows how the sixth Act of *Abhijnanasakuntalam* which portrays the love pangs of Dusyanta after he recovers from the effect of the curse of Durvasa causing amnesia, is proper for the delineation of the purified character of Dusyanta who half redeems himself through these genuine pangs of separation. Kuntaka gives equal importance to all the aspects of a poem: structure, texture, rhythm, imagery, diction etc. The post-*Dhvani* writers discuss it in relation of the treatment of *Guna* and *Dosa*. The credit goes to Ksemendra for developing this idea to its extreme and suggesting that *Aucitya* is the essence of *Rasa* - *Rasajibitabhuta* as he calls it. He argues that it is *Aucitya* which constitutes the basis of the charm or aesthetic rapture underlying the relish of *Rasa*. The *Alamkara* and *Guna* in poetry are justified by, and receive their true significance from, this element of *Aucitya* which, therefore, he claims can be called the soul of poetry. What is proper or most befitting for an object is *Ucita* in its relation to that object. In verses 8-10 Ksemendra calls attention to the various aspects of a metrical composition where the concept of *Aucitya* effectively operates. These are: *Pada* or phrase, *Vakya* or sentence, *Prabandārtha* or the composition as a whole, *Guna* or excellences; *Alamkaras* or the poetic figures, *Rasa* or the sentiment of a poem, *Kriya* or the employment of verb, *Karaka* or the use of case, *Linga* or the use of gender, *Vacana* or the number, *Visesana* or the qualifiers, *Upasarga* or prefix, preposition and particle, *Nipita* or redundancies, *Kala* or time and tense, *Desa* or country, *Kula* or family, *Vrata* or custom, *Tattva* or truth, *Sattva* or the inherent self, *Abhipraya* or motive, *Svabhava* or nature, *Sarasamgraha* or essential properties, *Pratibha* or natural talent, *Avastha* or the particular condition or state, *Vicara* or judgement, or thought, *Nama* or name and *Asirvada* or blessing. As Ksemendra presents it there are as many as twenty-seven forms or kinds of *Aucitya*. Ksemendra goes on to illustrate each of those items with a number of examples from Sanskrit texts taken from different works by different poets. And this he does by drawing parallels and contrasts. One example that illustrates the item as a successful employment of the theory of *Aucitya* is followed by a few examples of failure where propriety has not been maintained. Even then there is hardly anything original in the theory of *Aucitya* as propounded by Ksemendra. Ultimately it boils down to what Anandavardhana and his followers call *Sahridayatva* which implies propriety. Moreover, it is never possible to draw up a complete list of areas of the functioning of propriety, as it is not possible to exhaust the universe of poetry. While other theoreticians are myopic in their approach to poetry, confined to the special school that they are exponents of, Ksemendra discusses *Aucitya* in a manner which is more Catholic and universally applicable to all kinds of poetry and all schools of poetic theory. Moreover, his practical criticism that reminds one of the New Critics in general and I. A. Richards in particular is of immense value. Unless a theory is

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illustrated it lacks conviction. It needs a great deal of critical acumen to establish the propriety or the impropriety of a particular use, be it a lexical item or an image or a figure of speech. Ksemendra also shows great humility when he does not hesitate to point out areas where his own verses have gone wrong. It is not that he finds faults only in others; he finds faults in himself as well. Another aspect of Ksemendra's treatment of *Aucitya* that deserves mention is his courage of conviction in challenging established opinion regarding even a canonical literature. For example he censures Kalidasa's treatment of the love of Hara and Parvati in terms of love-making of the ordinary mortals. Incidentally Milton had to face the same kind of problem in describing the love between Adam and Eve in the fourth book of *Paradise Lost*.

Bharata, the first writer on Sanskrit poetics, treats of *aucitya* in his *Natyasastra* in relation to the problems of drama and stage representation. In regard to all the elements of verbal representation as well as those of stage performance, such as mode of address, gesture, intonation, etc., the *Natyasastra* is guided by the requirements of the mime: care and decorum. All the verbal features like diction, figures, *Gunas* (poetic excellences), and prosodic patterns are to be adapted to sentiments (*Rasa*). Thus, in the depiction of the Heroic, the Furious, and the Marvelous sentiments, light syllables, and metaphor, a condensed expression are appropriate, and for the odious and the pathetic sentiments heavy syllables are appropriate in expressing indignation or sorrow, prolated vowels, etc. In the choice of vocabulary too the playwright is to be guided by the appropriateness of speech to character. Anandavardhana who expounded the theory that *dhvani* suggested meaning (as distinct from expressed or indicated meaning) is the proper domain of poetic utterance shows that *dhvani* can be secured only in conformity to the well-known considerations of *aucitya*. He considers propriety in regard to *Gunas*, *Alamkaras*, propriety of diction, of the speaker and the spoken, and propriety in relation to the literary medium adopted. Thus the quality of sweetness goes well with the erotic sentiment, floridity with the furious, and so on. Similarly, alliteration, pun, rhyme, and other devices involving effort are not proper in the depiction of love-in-separation. Composition is also different in different forms of literature. The propriety of diction should always be decided in view of the sentiment to be delineated. *Alamkara(s)*, metaphor, etc. are a means to the delineation of sentiment, and are not an end in themselves. Anandavardhana is emphatic in declaring that there is no other cause for a break in sentiment (*Rasabhanga*) except "impropriety." He, however, does not understand propriety as mere conformity to rules of poetics. The writer of a composition is guided solely by the end of delineating sentiments and whatever promotes this objective must be understood to be proper to the composition.

The doctrine of decorum as developed in both Indian and Western poetics is based on the following assumptions: Firstly, the poetic end is separable from the poetic means. In every work there is a purpose, intention, or motive towards which the energies of the medium are directed, and in relation to which diction and the various elements of style become effective. Secondly we can talk about poetic subject (subject-matter + intention) and poetic form, each in relation to the other, and consider the appropriateness of form to content; and language itself is separable from Reality (poetic idea or experience). Thirdly, different kinds of compositions call for different compositional styles and devices (the theory of genres and poetic styles). Moreover, in view of the third aspect, the effectiveness of a composition is to be judged on its own peculiar terms, by its intention, and by the kind of work that it is, and not by any absolute criteria, poetic norms, excellences (*Guna*), and faults (*Dosa*). This implies plurality, not uniformity, of criteria for the judgment of literature.

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In the Western context, as well as in the Indian context, it means that in a good poem, action should be appropriate or befitting the character, there must be a perfect correspondence between matter and manner, between subject and lexis. A mighty character must be described in a dignified manner and trifling matters must be treated with humbleness. It should, however, be noted that although decorum in its Augustan sense had subsequently fallen into disrepute the theory of decorum in its original sense as suggested by Aristotle and subscribed to and reinforced by Cicero, Longinus and most importantly by Horace is still valid, as Marvin T. Herrick has pointed out: "No sensible poet or critic can quibble very much with the admonition that it is unseemly to use high-sounding expressions when speaking of the gutter and equally unseemly to use mean expressions when speaking of the majesty of Rome" (Preminger 188). When we compare the Western stand on propriety or decorum and the Indian speculations on propriety or *Aucitya* we are bound to be amazed by the meticulous care and elaborate treatment of the Indian aestheticians in expounding the idea of propriety.

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# The *Rasa* Theory, Modern Western Literary Theories and Mahesh Dattani's Play *Final Solutions*: A Study

Abhinandan Mal

The history of Sanskrit literature and literatures in other Indian languages produce so far, definitely direct to the fact that India has a rich heritage of *Poetics* and other literary genres which are in no way inferior to the *Poetics* and literatures of the ancient western civilizations. The ancient Indian literary culture is a reflection of the thought of the Indian aesthetics that developed during that period, especially in the Sanskrit literature. The works of the ancient Sanskrit scholars, right from Bharatmuni, Bharata, Dandin, Anandavardhana, Kuntaka to Abhinavagupta, have been rich sources of literary theories and philosophies that developed the ancient Indian literature. It is often claimed that Bharatmuni's *Natyasastra*, which has great similarities with Aristotle's *Poetics*, was written earlier than Aristotle's *Poetics* and it presents the theory like the development of dramatic plots, dramatic devices and the *Catharsis* more elaborately, distinctly and logically through the theory of *Rasa*, compared to the *Poetics*. This is an established fact that the heritage of Indian drama and theory provide us with more scope and opportunity to analyze and deal with modern literatures which are being produced in India and abroad in the modern period. It is unfortunate that due to lack of proper culture and study the rich resources of Indian *Poetics* are forgotten and we are looking towards the West for the theories to explain and develop new ways for writing literatures. This has led to the development of several disparities in the application of these western theories to the Indian literature. The cultural amnesia has crippled the Indian literary tradition which has made us more and more dependent on the Western thoughts. Thus, in a sense, the Indian literature is facing a crisis at present. This has been aptly described by G.N. Devy in his book *After Amnesia* where he says :

Let us list some of the more prominent symptoms of the crisis facing modern Indian literary criticism. They are: a proliferation of nonproductive commentaries on Western critical positions and thinkers; lack of initiative in modifying critical concepts, tools and criteria in the process of importation; inappropriate use of critical terminology developed in the West, mostly out of its original context, in an undisciplined way and without sufficient justification to use it; lack of scholarly material to support critical pursuits-want of literary biographies, bibliographies, translations of Indian and foreign works, editorial scholarship and relevant critical debate; inability to relate literature to other arts, the media and social and cultural phenomena; uncritical and uninformed attitudes to influence, absence of self-awareness and of tradition; arbitrary and mostly alien critical standards. (Devy 1984)

By providing such a long list of irregularities and failures that have kept the modern Indian literary tradition, due to our excessive dependence on the West, Devy shows us the fact that the Indian literature, whether written in English or in other regional language of India, cannot be accurately explained and analyzed by Western thoughts and theories. This is because Indian literature, written in Indian (regional) language, contains the Indian tradition, culture and the Indian sensibility which can be best explained by the ancient Indian theories of literature and aesthetics which are tested with time and tradition. In this paper I intend to study Mahesh Dattani's play *Final Solutions* and show how the ancient Indian *Poetics* and theories are relevant to the Indian literature in English that are produced

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the modern period. I also focus to show how the western theories and thoughts do not always clarify, distinctly, all the questions that arise after reading an Indian literary text written in English.

While studying the modern Indian drama written in English we see that the rise of pity and fear and their purgation have continued to exist as important factors for the development of the tragic climax. While defining various situations and problems of modern Indian society dramatists like Mahesh Dattani, Girish Karnad and others develop the climax through arousing different emotions, passions and human feelings, directly or allegorically, and the clearing of all those emotions from the heart of the characters (in the play) and the readers through dramatic revelations and subtle developments that make the readers/viewers realize the real situation of modern Indian society. In the plays of Mahesh Dattani we see that the playwright presents the different problems faced by marginalized classes like women, children, religious minorities, homosexuals, eunuchs and other oppressed classes. Though Dattani places all these problems in the Indian context but they do have a highly international value. But the emotions, pity and fear that are developed through these plays are deeply rooted in the Indian social milieu which can be understood and explained in details by applying the theory of Bharata's *Rasa* theory and in that case Aristotle's theory of '*Catharsis*' seems to be inadequate. The development of the emotions and the revelation of the situations need the application of the *Rasa* theory. This is because Bharata, very skillfully and in details, explains the nine *Rasas* in his *Natyasastra* which are highly relevant to the human psychology of the Indian people and the Indian social, cultural and traditional motifs. On the other hand it is obvious that Aristotle's *Poetics* remains silent of such details regarding the development and purgation/purification of such a variety of emotions and human feelings. Thus, there is a huge difference between the Eastern and Western dramatic traditions. While talking on this matter V.Y. Kantak says,

Consequently, the Aristotelian view of drama doesn't appear wide enough to include dramatic modes that developed independently in the East-whether Indian, Japanese or Chinese. There is never any ambiguity or doubt about the distinct character of the Eastern drama; a cursory comparison of a Sanskrit play or a Noh play with a Western classic brings out the great gulf that separates the two traditions. (Dati 35)

While talking about tragedy in his book *Poetics* Aristotle says that the function of tragedy is to arouse the emotions of pity and fear, and lead to the *Catharsis* of these emotions. Aristotle uses the term *catharsis* only once and the readers are deprived of further clarifications, though different interpretations are proposed and accepted worldwide regarding the definition and the actual function of *Catharsis*, like the 'purgation' theory, 'purification' theory, the 'clarification' theory and others. But in Bharata's *Natyasastra* we get in details the theory of *Rasa* which is nothing but the various emotions that develop in the heart of the characters or the audience/readers. Bharata's cryptic definition of *Rasa* in the *Natyasastra* is considered to be one of the basic concepts of Indian aesthetics. In the X chapter of *Natyasastra*, Bharata defines *Rasa* as: *vibhava anubhava vyabhihribhava samyogat Rasa nispatihi*, *Rasa* which arises from the harmonious blending of the primary emotion along with its secondary and tertiary emotional manifestations. The different kinds of *Rasa* as enlisted by Bharata are, *Shringara*(Love), *Hasya*(Joy), *Adbhuta*(Wonder), *Shanta*(Peace), *Raudra*(Anger), *Veera*(Courage), *Karuna*(Sadness), *Bhayanaka*(Fear) and *Vibhatsa*(Disgust). These *Rasas* explain different conditions of human mind which are displayed while experiencing the situations and problems that are developed in the drama. In Dattani's plays we get



a picture of the human psychology, emotion, reactions and characters that change and develop according to the changes in different situations thus, giving rise to different expressions which are nothing but the outward reflections of the various kinds of Rasas that arise in the heart of the characters as well as the readers/audience.

Mahesh Dattani's plays present a ground for the display of these Rasas in homogeneous proportions which give a panoramic view of the postcolonial Indian society. In his award winning play *Final Solutions* we see the display of various human emotions and reactions which can be better explained by applying Bharata's Rasa theory. The play deals with a sensitive issue of communal discriminations and violence which is a serious problem for an independent democratic country like India. In the play Javed and Babban are the representatives of the minority Muslim section of Indian society which has faced tremendous discrimination and negligence from the mainstream society. The reactions that we get from Javed and Babban towards the Hindu dominated society are the responses to those discriminations. We come to know about how Javed was treated like an untouchable in his childhood by a Hindu while he was playing cricket with his friends in the neighbourhood. Such humiliation continued in the educational institutions and other levels of society as well. The treatments gave rise to the *Karuna Rasa* or sadness which turned into *Vibhatsa Rasa* or disgust and ultimately giving rise to *Raudra Rasa* or anger. But it is not only the anger (or *Raudra Rasa*) out of which Javed and Babban pelted stones on the Rath procession. There is also the fear or the *Bhayanaka Rasa* that compelled them to react in such a way so that they can give a voice to the disgust, sadness and anger that is hidden in their heart for society. It is a form of a protest. While talking about throwing stones in the *Rath yatra* Javed says:

JAVED. I had permission to do exactly what I had been asked not to do all my life! Raise my voice in protest. To shout a scream like a child on the giant wheel in a carnival. The first screams are of pleasure. Of sensing an unusual freedom. And then...it becomes nightmarish as your world is way below you and you are moving away from it...and suddenly you come crashing down, down and you want to get off. (Dattani vol I 204)

All these together give rise to the pity and fear that are experienced by the characters like Javed and Babban and also the readers/audience of the play. This pity or *Karuna* and the fear or the *Bhayanaka Rasa* are dependent on the situations that are portrayed by Dattani while presenting the picture of modern India in a cross-section.

In the play Ramnik Gandhi acts as a listener to the problems of the discriminated individuals like Javed and Babban who are now retaliating against society. Ramnik Gandhi knows that his forefathers burnt the ancestral shop of Javed's family and bought it at a very low cost. Ramnik and his old mother Hardika are suffering from a sense of that guilt. It is a shock and at the same time surprise also to Ramnik and Hardika. It can be said that the dreadful past and the distorted present through which Javed and Babban are going give rise to *Karuna* and *Adbhuta* Rasas in the hearts of Ramnik and Hardika. *Shringara* (Love) and *Hasya* (Joy) rasas are not so prominent in the play. We realize the *Shringara Rasa* only when we come to know about the triangular love relationship between Babban, Smita (Ramnik's daughter) and Tasneem (Javed's sister). *Hasya Rasa* is also there. When we see Javed and Babban taking the idol of Krishna in their hands or when we see Javed, Babban and Smita going out of the house during the dawn and enjoying a new freedom. This freedom of joy is what we call



the *Hasya Rasa* in the words of Bharatamuni. This freedom is the freedom from the discriminating barriers of society. These *Rasas* describe different human emotions. Dattani presents these emotions to put forth the most important and widely talked issue of communal discriminations in postcolonial India. Thus, this (*Final Solutions*) is a play about emotions or *Rasas*. While, talking about the play the eminent theatrical personality Alyque Padamsee says :

But this is, above all, a play about a family with its simmering undercurrents. Ramnik, the father, transfers his resentment at his own father's black deed to his mother, Hardika.

Smita, the daughter, hits out at her mother, Aruna, when she can't cope with her hidden love for Babban, the outsider.

Hardika, the grandmother, builds up a hatred for Zarine, her best friend, and her community because she herself can't stand up to her own in-laws.

Aruna, the mother, seems to be the best adjusted, until her daughter shakes her belief in her religion. (Dattani vol I 161)

Thus, it is obvious that while *Catharsis* only explains the purgation of the pity and fear and purification of the soul at the end of the play when the climax is reached, the *Rasa* theory of Bharatmuni provides us with a scope to analyze the development of the tragedy that is dependent on different human emotions and passions which are the building blocks of the tragedy. At the end of the play *Final Solutions* we see that the shouting, screaming and other disturbances that were there in the beginning of the play, made by the rioters, have subsided and calm and peace preside over the situation. This can be called the *Shanta Rasa*, which is also the dominating *Rasa* of the great epic *Mahabharata*. In that peaceful situation Dattani, instead of giving any final solution to the problem in particular, suggests a way out which is prominent from his words with his mother Hardika where he says :

HARDIKA. Do you think...do you think those boys will ever come back?

RAMNIK. If you call them they will come. But then again-if it's too late-they may not. (Dattani vol I 226).

The *Shanta Rasa* can be equated with *Catharsis*. This is because at this point the characters and the readers/viewers are relieved, though partially (because the threat to the peaceful coexistence of the Hindus and the Muslims still persists in the play), from the horror, pity and fear that had grown right from the beginning of the play. This can be called as a point of purgation and purification which comes with the peace or the *Shanta Rasa*.

Thus, we can conclude that it is important to know the human sentiments and the psychology to understand the problems that are being faced by a particular individual in the Indian society. This can best be done by analyzing the particular *Rasa* that is predominant in a particular situation. Analysis of the *Rasa* also helps in understanding the development of the tragic plot of a play. I have tried to show that Bharata's theory of *Rasa* is relevant today and can be applied to analyze the modern dramas, in the Indian context, as well. Dattani's play *Final Solutions* provides the ground to study different *Rasas* that aptly brings out the tragedy of a particular class that is marginalized by the mainstream society. While Aristotle's theory of *Catharsis* only explains the ultimate purification, Bharata's *Rasa* theory helps us to explore different stages of the



development of this tragedy culminating to the climax and the final purification of the soul and mind which can be explained by the *Shanta Rasa*. This shows the appropriateness of the tradition of Indian theories which need to be harnessed to minimize the dependency of the Indian scholars on the Western thoughts while analyzing any particular Indian literary work. This can strengthen Indian literatures and their critical evaluations and can establish the merit of the Indian literary tradition.

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## A Rejoinder :

# Sanskrit Poetics and Literary Criticism in English

Rajnath

[In *Dialogue*, Vol. III, No. 2 December 2007, a special issue on **Indian Critics in English**, Prof. Ragini Ramachandra in her essay "Contemporary Indian literary Criticism in English : A Crisis of Identity?" highlighted the merits of Sanskrit Poetics in reading Modern Literature and criticised the tendency to neglect the use of Sanskrit poetics in the evaluation of Modern English Literature. Prof. Rajnath, a noted Indian critic, has his reservations regarding the use of Sanskrit poetics as the only Indian response to literary texts. In the present essay, he responds to Prof. Ragini Ramachandra's certain view points. The debate is significant for the present issue, hence we are publishing Prof. Rajnath's response to Prof. Ragini Ramachandra's essay. - Editors]

Ragini Ramachandra's essay on "Contemporary Indian literary Criticism in English: A Crisis of Identity?" (*Dialogue*, III, 2, December 2007) is written primarily to register her response to my "Nation and Indian Criticism in English." (*Dialogue*, III, I, and June 2007). I welcome disagreements provided they are expressed in the right spirit, which is true of Ramachandra's response. My response is not just to reply to her questions, but for a better understanding of the complexion and complexity of Indian English Criticism.

First of all, I must dispel the misunderstanding which she has and others of her ilk may have in future. I am not hostile to the use of Sanskrit poetics; on the contrary, I have always held an extraordinarily high opinion of Sanskrit poetics, which is evidenced by the two specials of my *Journal of Literary Criticism* on "Sanskrit Poetics and Western Criticism" (Vol II, No Dec. 1985 & Vol. VI, No.2, Dec. 1993) as well as occasional remarks in my writings. Throughout its long existence (1984 to 2008), the avowed aim of the *JLC* was "to bridge the ... gap between Oriental and Western criticism." Besides the two specials, several essays in the area of comparative poetics were published in the open issues and the contributors included Krishna Rayan, V.K. Chari, L.T. Lemon, Kapil Kapoor, M.S. Kushwaha and R.S. Pathak. That I have always held Sanskrit poetics in high esteem is borne out also by the following observations:

"There is a great deal in Sanskrit poetics which is still relevant and can be used to great advantage." (1999) .

"There is no denying that Sanskrit poetics is of much use to us." (2001).

"Sanskrit poetics is an exceedingly rich repository of literary and critical terms." (2007)

Within its limits Sanskrit poetics is non-pareil." (2007)

The last two extracts come from the essay to which Ramachandra has responded. With these facts and extracts before her, she cannot charge me with either ignoring



Sanskrit poetics or undermining its importance. Where she and I differ is in the critical attitude. She is a monist whereas I am a pluralist. She would like to think that the only right approach to literature by an Indian is the one which draws on Sanskrit poetics and Sanskrit poetics only. I welcome the response premised on Sanskrit poetics but do not rule out the possibility of other responses which either combine Sanskrit poetics and Western criticism as Krishna Rayan does or draw on Western criticism alone like Gayatri Spivak.

Ramachandra argues that Indian response is enshrined in Indian poetics which to her is almost synonymous with Sanskrit poetics. To prove her point she quotes with disapproval the following from my essay:

"... To believe that the application of Sanskrit poetics is the only Indian response to literature is to take a very insular view (15).

I have argued that the "Indian" today is not in the old pristine form but a conglomeration of several strains, Indian and foreign. Examining the influence of Islam on Indian culture, the noted historian Tara Chandra has argued that Muslims started arriving in India way back in the seventh century and that Islam was a major influence on Indian (read Hindu) culture throughout the Middle Ages<sup>1</sup>. Then came the Western influence with the arrival of the British in the Seventeenth Century, resulting in the Indian Renaissance in the nineteenth century. And, finally, arrived globalization in the late twentieth century which effected an unprecedented blend—of multiple identities. To think that now in the twenty-first century we can isolate the Indian (read Hindu) strain out of the hybridized Indian identity is to go on a wild goose chase. Ramachandra's Indian identity is so restricted that she would not like to include Buddhism as part of it because,

despite Buddha's magnetic personality which has captured the Indian imagination through the centuries, his teachings somehow have not struck the chords. Against such "background, it may not be very valid to claim that Derrida's philosophical tradition and William Empson's ideas derived from Buddhist thinkers have "roots" in the Indian Past .... (21).

We would have thought that Buddhism was and is an integral part of Indian Culture not only because it originated in India but also because of its influence on Hindu culture. Are we to think that "Indian" means "Hindu"? If so, the concept brings us close to the Hindutva agenda of some of the political parties. But politics and culture are two different domains: what is useful in politics may be out of place in the realm of culture.

Ramachandra would have us believe that an Indian should examine all literary texts, Indian as well as Western, in the light of Sanskrit poetics only. Why this obsession with Sanskrit poetics only in Indian English? I know that in Indian languages critics are much more open-minded and inclined to accept ideas from whichever quarters they come. I reiterate that I am not against Sanskrit poetics provided it is not allowed



to straitjacket critical thinking and critical practice. What is wrong in an Indian critic using a Western concept to study an Indian text? An eminent Hindi critic, Namwar Singh has demonstrated the inadequacy of Abhinavagupta's *Santa rasa* in the study of *Mahabharat* and fruitfully applied to it F.R. Leavis's concept of the "tragic experience"<sup>2</sup>. The general critique of Sanskrit poetics in this admirable essay is a fine corrective to the excessive, almost exclusive importance attached to Sanskrit poetics in the so-called "Indian response". Moreover, there is a rich tradition of Marxist Criticism in Indian languages. And now postcolonial theory which flies in the face of Sanskrit poetics is being used extensively in English as well as Indian languages. These non-Sanskritist approaches cannot be dismissed altogether, though we can by all means express our differences with them.

Ramachandra tells us that C.D. Narasimhaiah has himself expressed reservations about Sanskrit poetics saying that it cannot be used in the study of fiction and, by implication, the problem plays, the political poetry and the political novel. I do not know where Narasimhaiah has said it, and Ramachandra has not specified the source either. But if he has, as the latter asserts, I am in full agreement with him, and I would like other advocates of Sanskrit poetics to follow suit.

Ramachandra has raised another issue which must be addressed. Having stated the reservations that Narasimhaiah has had about Sanskrit poetics, she goes on to say:

Several of C.D. Narasimhaiha's essays substantiate how not all works can bear a classical strain and very few of them, in fact only the best ones can answer to the demands made by Sanskrit criticism (17)

If a text, say a problem play, a political poem, or a political novel does not stand the criterion laid down by Sanskrit criticism, then what is going to be our evaluation? Shall we dismiss it out of hand or shall we recognise the possibilities of other i.e. non-Sanskritist critical approaches? Here Ramachandra's critical monism becomes a stumbling block but my critical pluralism helps. Certain texts, and certain dimensions of all texts, call for interdisciplinary approach, as mere formalism for which Sanskrit poetics is most suitable, is inadequate.

There is a great deal which Narasimhaiah and I have in common. Like him, I am quite aware of the importance of Sanskrit poetics and have gone to the extent of studying Eliot's *Four Quartets* in the light of the Indian concept of *sadharanikaran* and the Western concept of poetry and belief.<sup>3</sup> I do not want this rich critical heritage to be neglected or marginalized but at the same time this must not be allowed to stultify our intellectual growth. After all, Sanskrit poetics, however precious, virtually came to an end in the seventeenth century with the last important exponent, namely Panditraj Jagannatha. Much water has flown under the bridge since the seventeenth century generally reckoned the beginning of Western modernism which percolated to our country during the British Raj resulting in the Renaissance in the nineteenth century. The Seventeenth



century also witnessed the emergence of the novel which slowly moved from the margin to the centre knocking poetry and drama off their high pedestal. Thus when Sanskrit poetics was coming to an end, a new poetics was necessitated in the West in the wake of the novel, which was supplied in the course of time by critics like Henry James, the Russian Formalists, Mikhail Bakhtin and a host of others. What is valuable and tenable in the past must be adhered to but this should not render us intransigently resistant to new concepts.

I wish to end on an optimistic note. I am glad that the - Sanskritists in English studies are reviving our rich critical heritage but the revival should result not in sheer repetition but the enrichment through contact with the other traditions which have now become available.

### Notes

1. See Tara Chandra, *Influence of Islam on Indian culture* (Allahabad, 1976). On p-25 he gives an account of the first arrival the of Muslims in India.
2. Namwar Singh's essay on "Anandavardhan Reading the Mahabharat" was first presented at a seminar at Dhavanyalok, Mysore in 1991 and later included in C.D. Narasimhaiah, *East West Poetics at Work* (New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 1994), pp 162-168. For Leavis's concept, see his "Tragedy and the Medium"; *The Common Pursuit* (London, 1966), p.127.
3. This essay presented at a seminar at Dhvanyalok, Mysore in 1991 has remained unpublished.



## Book Reviews

Binod Mishra (Ed.). *Spindle and the Wheel: Re- living Text and Context in Translation Studies*. New Delhi: Adhyayan Publishers and Distributors, 2011. pp xxviii+290. Rs795.

*Spindle and the Wheel: Re-living Text and Context in Translation Studies*, edited by Binod Mishra, is an anthology with twenty-two scholarly essays which deal with different aspects of Translation Studies. Some of these essays discuss the general problematic on Translation Studies whereas some others interpret the translated texts from the regional as well as other language texts into English. These texts have been chosen from different Genres of literature - drama, poetry, fiction, short story and autobiography. The texts chosen for interpretation by scholars range from different languages also, namely Hindi, Punjabi, Urdu, Marathi, Konkani, Kannada, Tamil and an African dialect. The variety, range and depth of the anthology therefore pose a number of difficulties for writing a brief review of the book.

The essays 1-4, 7-9 and 22 deal with theoretical issues and practical problems faced by a translator while engaging himself in translating specific texts. Z. N. Patil in his essay [No 1] views that English is a "twice-born language" because "it has to carry the weight of new cultural experiences". He firmly believes that all users of language are "creative" as they draw on linguistic resources to express different perceptions of reality. Problematising the role of translation in his essay [No 2], Prasant Mishra refers to postmodernist notion of text as being "flux". He pleads that a translated text is the "post life" of a source language text. He explains that a text is dismantled and deconstructed in the process of translation. In his essay [No 3] C.R.Kar problematizes the issue of translation as practice and argues that the translator must be more "semiotic" rather than "structural" to make his translation adequate. Chandra Mouli's discussion [Essay No.7] centres around the problematic of Translation, and its significance in carrying "cultures across the frontiers convincingly and conveniently. He further argues: "Translations do awaken hibernating conscience of fellow countrymen and spur them to undertake remedial measures sincerely. Wherever people are oppressed, resistance develops resulting in revolt, regeneration of life and reconstruction of a social order" [63]. G.A.Ghanshyam focuses on the issues of cultural translation with reference to Karnad's plays in his essay [No 8]. To him, translation as a cross-cultural process translates the "source culture" into the "target culture". Ghanshyam further pleads that English has transformed as an Indian language because of the amalgamation of indigenous nuances of Indian life into it. In his essay (No. 9), Prasant Mishra thinks that translation as a task-based approach can be used extensively for English Language Teaching [ELT] purposes to "improve different skills of the learners by providing tasks to translate written texts into oral mode, oral texts into written medium and oral texts into oral" [79].

In his scholarly essay [No 4], Olmedilla acknowledges the fact that recent developments in electronic instrumentation and computer science have changed the way language is thought about to be operating. He therefore proposes that the answer to chaos and imperfection as basic constituents of language operations such as language

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acquisition and translation are in primal states. His contention is that interaction is central to language acquisition and translation. He further thinks that language, language acquisition and translation as derivatives are coherent to chaos and imperfection. N. Sharda Iyer's essay [No 22], the last paper in the anthology also deals with the general problematic on Translation Studies. Her contention is the literatures written in *Bhasas* should be translated into English for recognition of their merits in the global level. She views that "the translator needs to stay very close to the original which belongs to a more developed language and literature" [283-284].

The anthology contains a number of essays [5, 8, 15, 16, 18] relating to problematic of translating dramatic texts. In his essay Khatri, problematizing the translation of a dramatic text, referring to Mohan Rakesh's play *Half-way House*. He views that the translation of a play should be stage-able, and the dialogues should be "natural, expressive and convenient" for the characters to utter in the target language. It is a challenging task for the translator to translate the dialects, proverbs, idioms, colloquial language and multi-lingual references in the dialogues in relation to variation in the socio-cultural moorings and educational standards of the characters. In his essay [No 15] Naikar deals with the translated text of Dharmavir Bharati's Hindi text *Andhayug* [Blind Age, 1954], translated into English by Alok Bhalla. Naikar interprets the vision of Darkness as depicted in the *Andhayug* [Blind Age]. Naikar argues that though the play deals with the last part of Vyasa's *Mahabharata*, Bharati has adapted in such a way that it is quite relevant in the contemporary context of nuclear conflicts and warfare. Naikar thinks that Bharati's efforts are quite commendable because dramatizing the *Mahabharata* to bring out its vision is not that easy. In the essay [No 16], Madhavi Nikam has interpreted Basavraj Naikar's *The Fall of Kalyana* by M.M Kaburgi. This play is based on the "philosophical preaching, social reform movements and revolutionary practices of Basava, who believed that change is the law of life and need of time" [178-179]. Pratima Chaitanya has analysed the play *Sangya-Balya* in English, translated from the Karnad play of Rayappa Pattar of North Karnataka. The analysis tends to be feminist with a focus on superstition, exploitation of the underprivileged, Ravana myth, Chastity and a conflict of past with present of Indian social ethos.

The three essays in the anthology [Nos 12, 17, 20] deal with translated texts in poetry from Marathi, Awadhi [a dialect of Hindi *Khari Boli*] and Hindi [*Sadhukari* influenced by various regional languages like Rajasthani, Bhojpuri, Avadhi, Punjabi, and Hindi spoken in eastern states]. In this respect Dilip Chitre's efforts as a bilingual poet of translating Namdeo Dhasal's *Muse* from Marathi into English as *Mirror* is really commendable. Arora's essay [No 12] deals with this translated text. Arora pleads that translation has enabled us to peep into others' psyches and "interacts with them in order to improve in adapting the best and adopting and making them improve by giving our best" [126]. Though the general notion is that it is difficult to translate poetry because the stylistic and linguistic paradigms carrying the ethos, Arora however thinks that something is gained in translation of poetry though there is sometimes some loss of elements of the original also. Mudita Agnihotri and Alok Pandey, while dealing with Manjhan's translated text *Madhumalati* in English by Aditya Behl, Simon Wightman with Shyam cogently argue that translation is not only the version of other languages but a strong means to connect humanity living in different cultures. He views that the Sufi poet, Manjhan's *Madhumalati*, a literary sublime discourse written in Hindi *Khari*

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*Boli*, can be relevant to any culture or place. Swatantra Asija interprets Kabir's mysticism in his poetry dealing with the English version of his poetry. He discusses the varied stages of soul's journey towards the Supreme Soul in the poetry of Sant Kabir.

The anthology's another thread of focus is on the translated texts of short stories, autobiography and novels [Nos 6, 11, 10, 13, 19, 21, 14]. Aruna Bomma Reddy focuses on the translating the complexity of the narrative, more specifically the narrative of the city projected in Amrita Pritam's short story "death of a city". In his essay [No6], Reddy views that it is a challenging task to bring out the thought patterns of a text contained in its symbolic and metaphorical modes represented by images, symbols and metaphors as is the case with "Death of a city". The city referred to in the story is far different from the industrial cities that we are familiar with. The city here stands as a metaphor for the inner life or the sexuality of a woman" [49]. Deepa S. Mathus's essay [No. 11] deals with Basie Head's *The Collection of Treasures*, the translated version of her own stories from *Setswana*, a regional language. The stories sensitively engage with the texture of village life evocatively depicting the configuration of belief systems, the contours of emotional and moral economy, the process of individuation, formation of desire, distribution of status, power relations, pattern of perception, and the institutionalization of pride and prejudice among individuals and groups in Botswana rural communities" [115]. This essay throws light on the only African translated text in which each story focuses on traditional culture, colonial and neo-colonial situation in Africa.

In her essay [No 14], Vandana Pathak interprets a translated text of a female Dalit autobiography. Pathak very forcefully analyses the English translation of Shantabai Kimble's Marathi autobiography *Mazhya Jalmachi Chittakatha*. She interprets the linguistic dimension of discourse in this autobiography. Pathak observes quite rightly: "*Boli* language has been employed in this autobiography for the uneducated, illiterate, and rustic characters. The use of social deixis and honorifics is also noteworthy. The change in the language proficiency of the protagonist depending on her education, background and interaction with other people in villages and cities is noticed in the Marathi edition. Code mixing, code switching, and borrowing form an integral part of the narrative strategy of the writer" [154-155]. All these sociolinguistic aspects pose a lot of difficulties to translate a Marathi text relating to Dalit autobiography.

The four essays [Nos 10, 13, 19 & 21] deal with translated novels from regional languages into English. Basavraj Naikar deals with a translated text titled *The Upheaval* by the Konkani writer Pundalik N. Naik in his essay [No 10]. *The Upheaval* holds mirror to the transition of Konkani society from tradition to modernity by depicting the subtle changes in the social, political and moral values of rural life. That is because Pundalik Naik has a first-hand experience of the rural life of Goa, which is characterized by poverty and suffering and dependence on agriculture for the bare sustenance" [86]. In their essay [No 13] Saurabh Shukla and Anurag Kr. Pandey have discussed the problematic of translating a text. They therefore write: "Translation is a complex, painstaking and demanding task. A translator has to operate from multiple choices to choicelessness. The translator hangs like *Trishanku* between two languages" [138]. In the context of Gillian Wright's translation of Dr. Rahi Masoom Reza's novel *Aadha Gaon* they have observed that Gillian took sufficient liberty for the effective transmission of the spirit of the work. They further argue that in Wright's *A Village Divided*, the

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translator "focuses on the content while remaining faithful to her own vision. In this process, she has recreated the text for the readers" [142]. They believe that while *A Village Divided* has lost something in the process of translation, it has also gained in some other way. In his essay [No 19], Basavraj Naikar discusses the subaltern vision in *The Edge of Time*, the English translation of M. Veerapa Moily's Kannada novel *Tembare* by Dr. C.N. Ramachandran. This novel deals with the culture of Tulu Land in North Karnataka, more specifically the life of the people belonging to the Pambada caste and culture, "which is one of the subaltern groups in coastal Karnataka" [213]. Naikar is critical of Moily for his fear to the upper caste, the Lingayat community: "Although the novelist has offered a very detailed realistic and ethnic picture of Tulu culture, including its subcastes, he fights shy of mentioning the exact caste of the owner of the rice mill, Girijapati and the local minister at Basavakalyana. He only mentions that the man belongs to the upper caste. One wonders why the novelist should have the fear of mentioning the name of the community in an ethnic novel." [239]. Naikar considers that *The Edge of Time*, the translated version of *Tembare*, has liberated the local text from the regional bondage into the global level giving it an opportunity of international recognition. Neeta Modi deals with the translated version *Godaan*. She believes that translation is rather difficult because "the translator is consciously or unconsciously always within the confines of the original". Modi views that innovative devices like translation, adaptation, borrowing, substitution, omission, compensation, reduction, deletion, cultural equivalence, descriptive equivalents, translator's note, paraphrase and above all common sense of the translator resolve the crises that a translator faces while translating culturally dominated texts.

Binod Mishra's effort in editing the book is really commendable because of the range, variety and depth of the papers on translation Studies the book includes. Although the book has been well produced, there are occasional spelling errors. Moreover, Mishra should have given more time for organizing and classifying the papers on the basis of theoretical issues and translated texts; and the papers on translated texts should have further been classified on the basis of Genres i.e. papers on drama, poetry, fiction, short stories and autobiography. Further, a paperback edition is necessary for making the book accessible to more number of readers. In spite of all this, the book is quite useful because of its contemporary relevance in the area Translation Studies.

Prakash Chandra Pradhat

Charu Sheel Singh. *Kashi - A Mandala Poem*. Adhyayan Publishers Distributors. New Delhi-110002. 1st ed. 2007. pp 92. price: Rs. 150.

Language in poetry is no poetic language that become moribund with time; it is a self-evolving diction and idiom that dictates its own tenor and vehicle. Mystic poets have to manufacture their panoply of words, phrases, mixed metaphors to shock into sense the dull, insensate lovers of poetry. A common, nay, even commonplace instance from William Blake's *The Tyger* will serve. The couplet reads: "What the hammer? What the chain? / in what furnace was thy brain?..."

Mystic poets are able to melt iron-metaphors hammer, chain, furnace in their forge for purposes of communication. Charu Sheel Singh distinctly belongs to this camp and

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*Kashi* can claim the status of such a work. *Kashi* is a definitive version of a definition-less phenomenon.

The lines 'Linga's hieroglyphic ... Eternity (p.12, last para) etch an archetype of cosmic creation. The saga of Madhava's insatiable urge to script 'a *Kashi* conundrum story' extending from p.16 through p.21, buffeted and intercepted as it must be by real-time's interruptions reveals a grand poetic march, a cohesive creative intellect. Can one ignore such brilliant descriptions of the grand-thought-thwarted divine process:

One cannot  
march more than the space  
one is drawn into. So Madhava stood  
non-sequentially silent  
in the still emptiness of His  
own Being (21).

And its preceding five lines, "The embryonic wealth of seasons ... potter's clay hymns", in their fine poetic flare bear out one incontrovertible truth about Singh's poetic or creative genius. That he never rides on the wings of Pegasus, is never carried away by poetic afflatus. He is not clay-footed, but a firm-footed realist even at the height of his supernatural flights. Not "an ineffectual angel beating upwards his luminous wings in vain", but a human fired by an angelic spirit to uncover the dreg and dross that overlie *Kashi*.

The lines beginning 'Bewilderment flew...' at page 38 through p.40 take us through a creational upheaval-the 'pomegranate' metaphor that graph the interstices of the mind is - I term it as meta-metaphysical (p.38 bottom). The subsequent verse render circumambient silence masterfully.

The signified  
solitude did not need  
a signifier for it was  
self-born as an ideational  
lotus of Being. (38-39)

One may comment that such abstractions are unfounded and confusing, but a fusion of the archetype and the homely comes pat in a genuine mystic sensibility. I allude to another mystic poet, homelier and simpler than Blake - his predecessor in the craft. Robert Herrick's 'Cheery-Ripe' sings a cherry peddler's joy. When asked where it grows his answer is a mystic conundrum to a commoner cherry lover: "There / where my Julia's lips do smile..."

However, it were better if Singh had abjured his literary analysis, as in 'Ode to Psyche and the West Wind ... etc'(48 last stanza) as it detracts partially from the eminently quotable preceding verse, "*Kashi* was Shiva's / spandan knowable to the extent / one becomes Shiva." I feel personally that the poem's texture and breadth is powerful and self-assertive enough as they stand - such allusions denigrate its poetic worth, a blend of the vital and the jejune.

Devodas - Parvati - *Kashi* - Hari Vishnu episodes dot the poem's body; their episodic contribution passes over me as I am untrained in that literature. Yet I, as lay and unclerical in the book's study-material, can appreciate and do feel drawn into the imbroglia which the holy powers had to contend with to retrieve *Kashi* and her glory.

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To any Hindu brought up under its traditional lore and rituals Kashi is sacred, more denominational. The lines, "Kashi filtered its ... Shiva as jyotirlinga" (61-62) surcharge Shiva's entry into the holy sanctum as an unprecedented event as the saints by the Ganges shout 'Kash! Kash!' nearly blinded by 'the blasting dove of light divine.' (cf. Eliot's line 'The dove descending rends the air').

In my reading, *Kashi* is eminently readable as a piece of literature. It is exploratory in form; its verse is unconventional and preeminently matching the theme. Only a more informed approach would have been more rewarding.

Asim Kumar Mukherjee

Basavaraj Naikar. *The Holy Water*. New Delhi: Sarup Book Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 2011. PP.56. Rs.200.

Translation as a creative art has played a vital role in the dissemination and preservation of knowledge throughout the ages. The remarkable scientific and technological progress and the spectacular rise and development of literature, arts, trade, commerce and the marvellous discoveries in the field of medicine have made the art of translation indispensable. Translation has a long and rich history like any other branch of study. Owing to translation the literary heritage of human civilization is made available in every part of the world. Great translations are, in fact, a permanent asset to any literature. Without translations great religious works such as *the Bible*, *the Quran*, *the Bhagavad Gita* and the epics like *the Iliad*, *the Ramayana*, *the Mahabharata* and the world classics such as *War and Peace*, *Arabian Nights*, *Alice in Wonderland* and the unique histories of different civilizations of mankind could not be known to people living in different parts of the world. Because of translation only the works of great authors such as Dante, Seneca, Shakespeare, Leo Tolstoy, Goethe, Kalidas, Tagore and Dostovsky are known to the entire world.

Translation has undeniably generated a space for itself in the literary circle in India which is widely known for its multi-linguistic culture. Indian Drama in English depends very much upon the translation of works in regional languages into English. Unlike the translation of other literary genres like novels and poems written in regional languages into English the translation of Indian Drama in English is limited in number. Some of the renowned and illustrious playwrights who have translated their dramas written in regional languages into English are Rabindranath Tagore, Badal Sircar, Mohan Rakesh, Girish Karnad, R.S. Badal, C.C. Mehta, Maheswata Devi, Vijay Tendulkar and Gurujada Apparao. Several dramas written in Bengali, Hindi, Kannada and Marathi have been translated into English. These translations have undoubtedly embellished the corpus of Indian Drama in English.

Basavaraj Naikar, an eminent bilingual writer in Kannada and English, is a novelist, short story writer, playwright, cultural historian, literary critic, translator, editor and reviewer. Having authored several books both in Kannada and English Naikar has established himself as an illustrious writer both at the national and international literary circles. He has translated several literary works from Kannada into English and vice versa.

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versa. His recently published book, *The Holy Water: A Cultural Translation of The Well of the Saints* (2010) is an English translation of the Kannada play, *Jogibhavi* which itself was Naikar's Kannada translation of J.M. Synge's play *The Well of the Saints*. Knowing fully well the futility of translating a play of Western culture into Eastern culture especially in the case of his translation of J.M. Synge's *The Playboy of the Western World* into Kannada entitled *Paduvana Nadina Premavira*, Prof. Naikar chose the religious theme of Synge's play *The Well of the Saints* for his Kannada translation. Moreover, he found that the Christian theme i.e., "the common man's belief in the miraculous powers of the Christian saint" could be easily translated into Kannada and set against Hindu culture, especially the Lingayat tradition of North Karnataka. He also felt that the religious theme of Synge's play could be suitable for cultural transformation though Irish culture is different from Kannada culture. As one who knows Kannada culture and the cultural sensibility of Kannada people thoroughly Naikar transformed the Christian saint found in the original play into a Lingayat Swami. The village in Ireland in the original text is transformed into Naragund, a small town in Dharwad district of Karnataka. The Irish characters are transformed into Kannada characters. Similarly the well of the saints is transformed into *Jogibhavi*, i.e., the well of the *jogis* or *yogis*.

The tremendous success of the Kannada translation of *The Well of the Saints* made Naikar translate it back into English. The play was entitled *The Holy Water* bearing a great flavour of Kannada culture. In the preface to the re-translation of the Kannada play Basavaraj Naikar observes: "It is an interesting attempt at re-translating the play back into standard English (as different from the Irish English) but enriched with the Hindu, Kannada culture, to see how the English speaking readers and spectators would receive and respond to it and how the drama directors would handle it and how the original vision of J.M. Synge would express itself in spite of the cross-cultural clothing of it" (Preface).

*The Holy Water* is a comedy in three acts. It is set in Naragund, a small town in Dharwad district of North Karnataka. The play has a symmetrical structure. Blindness is a recurring motif through which themes of illusion and reality, the notion of willing suspension of disbelief, the role of religion and the village community in the life of a blind couple are explored. The blind couple who are weather-beaten wandering beggars subsist on the community's beneficence. The villagers take great pleasure in making fools of the couple by convincing them that they are more beautiful than others though in truth they are ugly, old and weather-beaten. A Lingayat Swami comes and restores their eyesight with the water taken from a holy well. After getting their eyesight the beggar couple face the world of reality. They now understand that they were deceived deliberately by the villagers. Greatly disappointed with their original appearance they drift apart. In the final act the symmetrical structure of the play becomes complete when the couple once again lose their eyesight. They now willingly decide not to have their eyesight restored by the Swami. They choose to live in a world of illusion in which they can imagine that they are beautiful even in their old age.

As a comprehensive art, Drama forms an essential part of any civilized society. Since dramatic urge is quite universal the theatre has never failed to make a powerful



appeal to man. Basavaraj Naikar's *The Holy Water* is undoubtedly a great milestone in the realm of Indian Drama in English Translation. With his genuine artistic ability and true scholarship Naikar depicts the religious and the cultural heritage of North Karnataka. As a skilful translator he efficiently brings out in his translation the psychological and philosophical perception of thought and vision of the original text of the play. The impressive and convincing dialogues found in the play reveal the true dramatic acumen and the theatrical craftsmanship of the translator. The events and situations which are dramatically portrayed will never fail to appeal to the reading public and the theatre goers.

The play has become a popular one among different kinds of people because of its plot, theme, style, language and appealing nature. The play abounds in a number of images which are peculiar to Kannada culture. With great imagination and artistic skill Naikar has created characters which are real and genuine. Characters such as Chennamalla, Chenni, Manappa and Malli seem to be real human beings with their common human weaknesses. Since they possess universal characteristics they easily elicit the sympathy of the audience for them. In fact, Naikar has endowed his characters with the reality of life. On the whole, Basavaraj Naikar's *The Holy Water* is undeniably a valuable addition to the corpus of Indian Drama in English Translation.

S John Peter Joseph

O. P. Mathur. *Post-1947 Indian English Novel: Major Concerns*. New Delhi: Sarup and Sons. 2010. pp. x + 181. price : Rs. 600.

Prof. O.P. Mathur is a renowned scholar and a well known authority on the Indian English (political) Novel. The book under review is divided into thirteen chapters, the chapters being devoted to Chaman Nahal, Manohar Malgonkar, Raja Rao, Bhabani Bhattacharya, Nayantara Sahgal, Salman Rushdie, Amitava Ghosh and Arvind Adiga. The first chapter presents a bird's eye view of the Indian English political novel while the last ruminates over the whole era of novel writing since 1947. The first chapter is a masterly presentation of the Indian English political novel touching upon the mainstream novelists like Khushwant Singh, Manohar Malgonkar, Gurucharan Das, B.Rajni Salim Sinai, Rajgill, H.S. Gill, Attia Hosain, Salman Rushdie, Nina Sibal, Shashi Tharoor, Amitav Ghosh, Mukul Kesavan, Bapsi Sidhwa, S.S. Baldwin, Arvind Adiga among others. Prof. Mathur's method is formal, comparative, analytical, and, of course, historical. The intent of analysis realizes between the differences what Prof. Mathur calls the merely melodramatic (Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan*) and the more value centered-novel such as Chaman Nahal's *Azadi*. Prof. Mathur's catholicity and his delicate sense of imaginative reconstruction of the story line presented in the novel inclines to the view that suffering, as Gandhi viewed it, is a mode of redemption not only for the community and the nation but for the narrative itself. This view holds true of the novels of Malgonkar, Bhabani Bhattacharya, Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao among the rest. Rushdie gives narrative the format of a fairy tale with illusions of magical realism abounding. Amitav Ghosh's *Shadow Lines* allegorizes moment of division putting forward the theory of space in mind that shall absolve us from the nakedness of the representational language that stark social realism implies. Shashi Tharoor's *The Great*



*Indian Novel* has recourse to the low-mimetic modes of parody, irony, satire and sardonic humour. Arvind Adiga talks of the rank materiality and social, economic and political corruptions. He presents a dystopic vision of an unending malady. Wishing for a different social, political order which Prof. Mathur feels leads us to an ambivalent ending. Viewed on the whole, the book is a testimony to Prof. Mathur's scholarship which has lived and seen those times when India was under the British rule and when it got freedom. William Blake said once; 'As I grow weak in my body, I grow strong in my mind'. Prof. Mathur is the best example of the Blakean dictum.

Charu Sheel Singh

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## EDITORIAL

It is a universal truth that children are the most precious possessions of the world but the literature that portrays their dreams, desires and problems stand neglected and ignored. The inquisitive and imaginative mind of children loves to enjoy fairy tales, fables, fancy stories and they love to watch cartoons, comics and horror movies. If the adult world is the world of seriousness, reason and logic, children's world is enlivened by the wonderful, the improbable and the super-natural.

It is ironical that children literature is written by the adults. Since time immemorial, man in different parts of the world, has contributed to children literature in the form of tales that have created fantastic worlds of fairies, genies, spirits, talking trees and animals to entertain and inculcate among them the highest values of life, Nature and culture.

Children literature at a particular period of time in a country enshrines the cultural values, cherished by the people of that time. What the adults envisioned as the ideal in their culture, they tried to pass on to children in forms of imaginative stories and fables. Aesop's *Fables*, the *Arabian Nights*, the *Panchtantra*, the *Hitopadesh*, the *Brihatkatha*, *Kathasarit-Sagar*, the *Jatakas*, and the stories of *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* have been the classics of children literature in the world. They have not only preserved the cultural psyche of man but have also entertained and ennobled generations of children.

The present issue has select fifteen articles which focus on children literature and its problems. While Vineet Kaul and Murlikrishnan define and analyze the relevance of children literature, there are five papers on great Indian writers of children literature: R.K. Narayan, Sukumar Ray, Manoj Das, Ruskin Bond and D. M. Majumdar. Critical articles on CS Lewis's *The Chronicles of Narnia*, J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series, Charles Kingsley's *The Water Babies*, Tolkien's *The Hobbit* and Walt Disney's *Little Mermaid* along with three articles on German, Canadian and Kenyan children literature just give a glimpse of children literature in the world.

Children literature has immense possibilities and draws avid attention of critics not only to examine the politics of representation but also to devise new canons to evaluate this particular kind of print literature that has serious threats and challenges in the present age of audio-visual gadgets, when children all over the world are gradually dissuading from the reading of books.

- Sudheer C. Hajela



## Children's Literature

Vineet Kaul

"A folktale is a poetic text that carries some of its cultural contexts within it; it is also a travelling metaphor that finds a new meaning with every telling" - A.K. Ramanujan.

Long before modern media entertained us storytelling was a common pastime, and a good storyteller was a valuable attribute to the community. Folktales and fables are one of the oldest educational tools through which cultures have passed down values and lore from one generation to the next. Early childhood education needs to embrace literacy programs, which actively employ storytelling to bridge their established oral skills and their new found literacy skills. By doing this children will encounter a broad range of language: new words, archaic expressions, puns, phrases, rhymes, chants, tongue twisters, metaphor, figures of speech, and revoiced dialogue. This establishes an extensive oral language base for building on literacy skills, such as word recognition, spelling, grammar, literary conventions and comprehension. It is essential to present storytelling and literacy experiences that are meaningful to the children; therefore their social and cultural experience needs to be reflected in the choice of stories and the choice and use of text. Cultivate the development of children's literacy skills, by providing opportunities to play with words, with story, and with text. Traditionally, folktales taught the adults and children of a region how to live; it set a pattern for right living, directing almost a moral code of behaviour for a group of people. These tales were passed from one generation to the next and framed a set of rules for emulation. Today, the oral tradition has been replaced by mass media and children's books have become the conservators of the oral tradition.

It is unfortunate that though India has 22 official languages and 1,652 dialects plus a rich oral tradition in story telling as exemplified by *the Panchatantra*, hardly anybody takes children's literature seriously. In the West children's literature is a serious discipline. The US has the oldest prize for children's literature, the Newbery award, and for picture book literature for small children they have the Caldecott award. The Swedish government sponsors the Astrid Lindgren Memorial Award. We don't have anything like this. Also, there is an absence of refinement. We must understand that children's literature caters to different age groups. It is important for an author to understand the psychology of children. For example, small children want to hold big books whereas older children want to hold small books. Then the subjects need to be tailored according to age groups. But most authors and publishers here don't have a clue.

In recent years children's literature has assumed greater importance, as literary critics, psychologists, anthropologists, and historians have begun to discover what children and parents have known for centuries: that this is a literature of extraordinary richness, depth, and delight. Children's literature is any literature that is enjoyed by children. More specifically, children's literature comprises those books written and published for young people who are not yet interested in adult literature or who may not possess the reading skills or developmental understandings necessary for its perusal. In addition to books, children's literature also includes magazines intended for pre-adult audiences. The age range for children's literature is from infancy through the stage of early adolescence, which roughly coincides with the chronological ages of twelve through fourteen. Between that literature most appropriate for children and



### Children's Literature

that most appropriate for adults lies young adult literature. Usually young adult literature is more mature in content and more complex in literary structure than children's literature. Most of the literary genres of adult literature appear in children's literature as well. Fiction in its various forms—contemporary realism, fantasy and historical fiction, poetry, folk tales, legends, myths, and epics—all have their counterparts in children's literature. Nonfiction for children includes books about the arts and humanities; the social, physical, biological, and earth sciences; and biography and autobiography. In addition, children's books may take the form of picture books in which visual and verbal texts form an interconnected whole. Picture books for children include storybooks, alphabet books, counting books, wordless books, and concept books.

Poetry also became a part of children's literature rooted in oral literature, such as lullabies, ballads, and nursery rhymes. Early poetry printed specifically for children was most often instructional, morally edifying, and rhymed in order to aid in memorization. As Puritanism waned and new ideas about childhood and education emerged, poets began writing not only to instruct children, but also to tell a story and entertain. The acceptance of fantasy in the 19th century paved the way for a blossoming of poetry for children in the 20th century, encompassing elements of storytelling, fantasy, humor, light verse, multiculturalism, and social change. Ongoing advances in printing technology also affected developments in illustration. More recent trends include an increasingly visual approach to poetry in children's picture books; novels in verse; a revival of young adult interest and participation in poetry; and the innovative use of electronic formats, sometimes in ways that reconnect poetry with its oral roots. Poetry for children continues to flourish and evolve because of the capacity for perception and imagination shared by children and poets.

### Literature in the Lives of Children

Today, Children's Literature is central to childhood development beyond the traditional notions of literacy and learning. Children's literature is a powerful tool to teach children about the world, themselves, and others. Children's literature motivates readers to think, enhances language, and promotes cognitive development. Quality literature takes children beyond their own lives, broadening their backgrounds, developing their imaginations, and enabling them to grow in understanding and respect for others. Children can connect with the characters, events, places, and problems in literature on a personal level. Such affective responses to literature provide opportunities for students to become personally involved in reading and learning. Children's literature is diverse and varied. For example, children's literature includes the following genres: picture books, contemporary realism, historical realism, fantasy, traditional literature, poetry, biography and autobiography, and informational books. Children's literature can be read and enjoyed for personal purposes, but it can also be used to enhance the school curriculum. Because of the wide variety of excellent children's books, teachers can use children's literature in reading instruction, but also in science, social studies, health, and even math lessons. Using children's literature across the curriculum provides many advantages over traditional textbooks. In comparison to textbooks, children's literature offers greater depth of content, multiple perspectives, current information, engaging writing style, personal voice, options for varied reading levels, rich language, and interesting formats and structures.



Literature experiences can play an important role in the development of reasoning abilities in children by provoking them to "analyze, synthesize, connect, and respond thoughtfully". Through literature that offers diverse perspectives on familiar topics, children have the opportunity to try on different roles, imagine new settings, and solve problems. In *The Librarian of Basra*, children are exposed to the war in Iraq and Muslim culture. Although some people may object to the idea of presenting the Iraq War in a picture book, the story of a heroic librarian is very inspiring and demonstrates the power of an individual to make a difference in her community. This story also provides an introduction to ways of life in the Middle East which most children in other countries have had little exposure to. Illustrations of people, things, and the environment depict a very different culture, yet people in Iraq are shown to also value knowledge and culture. Stories like these are important for children because it helps to dispel stereotypes based on religion and ethnicity. "Multicultural literature can be a very powerful tool for helping children to better understand the world in which all of us live" (Levin 2007). Another positive outcome of exposure to multicultural literature is that it offers the chance for more children to see themselves in the stories they read. It offers the opportunity to experience textual images that foster cultural pride, a sense of belonging, and self-respect.

Literature has a vital role to play in motivating children to read and developing skills in language arts. Stories that captivate the imagination provide a rich foundation from which skills in speaking, listening, reading, and writing can be developed. Exposure to children's literature provides the opportunity for children to hear and read good writing that is beyond the level of their own conversation. Since the capacity of children to produce language has been shown to lag behind their ability to understand it, it is important for children to be provided with opportunities to experience the rich and expressive language to be found in quality children's literature.

Children literature is universally admitted to be the perfect vehicle to improve reading comprehension since it is motivating in itself and offers a great variety of texts and authors to be explored. The advantages of using children literature to improve reading comprehension and skills, to explore new vocabulary, to internalise grammar and linguistic structures, are universally recognised, apart from widen children horizons, help children to understand the world that surrounds them, get to know other cultures, other people, respect traditions, promote ethical values, develop a life-long pleasure in reading, have fun and accept other ways of being and behaviour.

Literature is also seen as having several psycho-social uses for young children. In general, literature is said to provide characters and events with which children can identify and through which they can consider their own actions, beliefs, and emotions. The characters and situations in books introduce children to what the world may look like through others' eyes and offer a chance to further construct their own views of self and the world. One important characteristic of high-quality children's literature is the degree to which it "tells the truth" about the human experience. Moreover, the characters...are true to life, and the insights the books imply are accurate, perhaps even wise. In fact, children's literature can often be "subversive," celebrating "daydreaming, disobedience, answering back, running away from home, and concealing one's private thoughts and feelings from unsympathetic grown-ups". Traditional literature in particular, such as legends and fairy tales, is sometimes seen as resonating with common cross-cultural childhood psychological concerns such as abuse, abandonment, and coming of age.



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Traditional literature is also seen as having a didactic purpose, at least in original form. Myths, sagas, and other aspects of oral traditions are said to have been vehicles by which any society would pass on knowledge, ideas, and admonitions to its children, in the absence of a writing system. Feminist scholarship has reframed many European fairy tales as carrying the culture's models for young women. Contemporary educators in the United States sometimes use traditional literature as a window on other cultures, but this practice is seen as problematic. Nonfiction, or informational books, have openly didactic purposes: to foster an interest in inquiry and involvement in the world or to inform, instruct, and enlighten. Nonfiction literature is expected to make clear distinctions between fact, theory, and opinion. Scientific, mathematical, and historical content must be accurate, verifiable, and up to date; and stereotypes must be avoided. An increasing number of informational books are written and illustrated in a manner that provides aesthetic as well as learning experiences.

One of the most persuasive rationales for sharing literature with young children is that it benefits language and literacy development. For years, researchers, teacher educators, parent educators, and parents have recognized the value of reading to children, and numerous studies document the beneficial effects of reading to preschool children. For instance, correlational study on the effects of picture book reading found that the frequency of listening to stories between the ages of 1 and 3 years was significantly associated with literacy and oral language skills as measured at age 5 by the children's teachers. However, in its most authentic form it is an area of literature that focuses on the reality of various cultures. Multicultural literacy for young children should be coined as an important agenda at schools and homes. Children's literature has a great potential to articulate underrepresented children and help children understand how to appreciate cultural diversity.

### What is Children's Literature?

Like the concept of childhood, children's literature is very much a cultural construct that continues to evolve over time. Children's literature comprises those texts that have been written specifically for children and those texts that children have selected to read on their own, and the boundaries between children's literature and adult literature are surprisingly fluid. Why children's literature is expected to perform a moulding role is obvious. Child rearing has in some way to be geared to the needs of industrial capitalism. In the first half of the last century, when working class children were little more than tools to oil the new machines, it was considered that they didn't need books. Meanwhile their 'betters' read of empire and prepared for rule. A century later children were prepared for their differing roles in mature capitalism in secondary modern and grammar schools and a major function of children's literature was to teach the 'failures' to be satisfied with their lot. During the late 1960s and early 1970s there was to a certain extent a progressive revolution in education and children's literature.

Hard as it is to define, children's literature is now recognized as an important field of study, both in itself and for the insights it yields into literature as a whole - as well as into the family life, society and thinking of any given period, and the minds of the many major authors influenced by it. On all counts, it is a fascinating and rewarding subject.

Children's literature is any literature that is enjoyed by children. More specifically, children's literature comprises those books written and published for young people



who are not yet interested in adult literature or who may not possess the reading skills or developmental understandings necessary for its perusal. In addition to books, children's literature also includes magazines intended for pre-adult audiences.

Vineet Kaul

The age range for children's literature is from infancy through the stage of early adolescence, which roughly coincides with the chronological ages of twelve through fourteen. Between that literature most appropriate for children and that most appropriate for adults lies young adult literature. Usually young adult literature is more mature in content and more complex in literary structure than children's literature.

Through literature, children are taught attitudes and actions appropriate for themselves and their society. Literature, through content and through activities based on content and theme, can strengthen the development of self-concept and self-esteem. Books are written with the intention of presenting role models for children to emulate and help children discover themselves and explore the world. Words are merely words, but real literature for any age is words chosen with skill and artistry to give the readers pleasure and to help them understand themselves and others. Book experiences introduce the unknown, clarify and refine the known, and define the parameters of choice for one's attitudes and behavior.

Most of the literary genres of adult literature appear in children's literature as well. Fiction in its various forms—contemporary realism, fantasy and historical fiction, poetry, folk tales, legends, myths, and epics—all have their counterparts in children's literature. Nonfiction for children includes books about the arts and humanities; the social, physical, biological, and earth sciences; and biography and autobiography. In addition, children's books may take the form of picture books in which visual and verbal texts form an interconnected whole. Picture books for children include storybooks, alphabet books, counting books, wordless books, and concept books. Whilst the traditional view of literature in general focuses on text-based material, it is appropriate to include interactive software, hyper fiction and visual material in the classification of children's literature.

### What is Good Children's Literature?

Remember how Mom used to nudge you into exploring new foods? "Just try it," she'd say, as she served avocados or a new casserole. And as you grew up, you encountered many new favorites.

Children's literature is like that. You have your favorites now, but there are many dishes you don't know. As you try new ones, you'll find many reading levels, age groups, styles of writing and illustration, and audiences you also like. You'll see there's no one right way to write or illustrate or one group who will be your audience. And you'll notice that the tone you use in a book for a witty and worldly sixth-grade boy isn't the same tone you'd employ in a toddler's picture book. Most children tend to be honest and direct, so talk to them about what books they like. Ask your cousins', neighbors', and friends' kids what they like to read. Of course, if you have kids, ask them, too. If they feel comfortable with you, they'll tell you what they like and what they don't. Children like to make adults happy (well, most of the time), so don't telegraph the answers you want to hear when discussing books with them. Don't suggest possible titles, and don't settle for what they read in school. Ask them what they read when they get to pick their own books.



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If you have time, go back to your library or bookstore. Sit quietly in a strategic spot and watch what children pull from the shelves and read. As you do, remember that children's tastes can outweigh any marketing plans. The initial popularity of the Harry Potter series came from word-of-mouth through kids in the United Kingdom, not what the publisher did. That's kid power! Knowing what is considered good children's literature would require that you study the most popular children's literature series of the last few hundred years. Harry Potter may be the most popular example of children's literature since the invention of the printing press. Many people have been puzzled as to why the Harry Potter series is such a mega hit and others have tried to trash the series as derivative. More importantly vast amounts of children and adults view the Harry Potter series as the perfect example of what is good children's literature. What makes the series so special?

One reason for the popularity of the Harry Potter series is Harry Potter himself. He seems like the perfect protagonist because he is someone the reader wants to and even needs to root for. Because his parents died when he was a baby, he was raised by his aunt and uncle. Basically, he was the unwanted person in the house. Treated like a servant who lives in the cupboard under the stairs, Harry grows up lonely and unloved. His cousin Dudley, and what a dud he is, picks on him every chance he gets. He even allows his friends to bully Harry. In the beginning of the first book, Harry wears castoff clothes that are too large, is badgered by everyone, and feels as though he doesn't fit anywhere in the world. Who can't identify and love the orphan whom no one loves or even likes.

Throughout the seven book series, Harry matures to a young man of seventeen. Although he moves to adulthood, some aspects of his character never changes. Harry remains the very honest, courageous, loving, and kindhearted boy his parents raised for one year. Even though he is faced with every possible obstacle, he never sways from his quest to rid the world of the evil Voldemorte, even being ready to give up his own life.

Many of the characters in the book see Harry as a hero and when he finds out that he is a wizard born of wizards, he is shocked and delighted. Finally, he can get away from the Dursleys even if it's just for the summer. On his way to Hogwarts, everyone seems to stare at him. Rather than enjoying the limelight Harry shies away from it. During the course of the seven books, Harry never tries to be the showoff. Sure he is good at Quidditch, a powerful wizard who has overcome Voldemorte many times, and courageous way beyond his years, but Harry never plays the braggart. He never feels that he is worthy of all the attention he has received. He is horrified when the Ministry of Magic spreads lies about him, but he remains determined to do what is right.

Harry may be a hero but he is far from perfect and often his imperfections make him even more interesting and more appealing as a character. He is shy, especially around girls. When he is forced to go to the Winter Formal, he is petrified and ends up losing his date to another boy. His best friend Ron is equally scared of girls. They end up spending the evening together acting silly just as one would expect young teenage boys to act. He can be very angry. Faced with the death of those close to him, faced with having to hide at the headquarters of the Order of the Phoenix, Harry becomes someone no one wants to be around. He takes his teenage angst to another level. His anger, however justified, does show that he isn't perfect, which is one of the reasons we love him. If he were perfect, he would be not only unbelievable but rather boring.

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One more reason why the Harry Potter books answer the question 'what is good children's literature' is that the plots are full of suspense and because J.K. Rowling plotted each book carefully before it was written, she always left questions to be answered. Right up until the last book, readers have questions that they were dying to have answered. Even the last book doesn't answer everyone's questions. Because readers had to wait years between books, children and adults argued endlessly about possible plot lines and answers to burning questions. Basically the plot is very simple. Young orphan boy finds out he is a wizard and goes to Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. Young magical boy finds out that a powerful, evil wizard tried to kill him and did kill his family. Young magical boy finds out that Voldemort wants to kill him. Young magical boy finds out that it's kill or be killed. Young wizard is victorious and saves the world. The story is simple. It's the getting there that is magical.

To try to discover what makes good children's literature is a bit like trying to capture light in a bottle. It may remain Impossible, but it is great fun to try.

### Gender Issues in Young Children's Literature.

Gender bias as portrayed in children's literature is still as prevalent today as in past decades, and remains a problem in light of the fact that gender stereotypes and sexism in children's picture books affect the development of gender identity in young children. Numerous studies of children's literature content indicate that male figures dominate the majority of books. This condition affects children's development and perceptions. Children adopt certain roles and behaviors as part of their socialization process. Many of these gender-based, behavioral roles arise from identification with others. The development of gender-role identity is important to children's self-perception, and influences adults' and peers' treatment of children. Gender affects others' expectations of children and youngsters often do not understand the expected behavior. The purpose of this article is to examine the current gender issues extensively revealed in children's literature.

Strictly speaking, everything that children read contributes to the formation of self-images that help to construct children's self-identity. For example, girls can imagine themselves as women and boys can imagine themselves as men. Images and specific language used in picture books have the potential to affect children's developmental processes in various ways as a result of reading at crucial stages of development.

Besides being an important resource for developing children's language skills, children's books play a significant part in transmitting a society's culture. Without question, children develop gender-role identities during their early years, and one factor that influences this identity is the literature that children read or is read to them. Picture books also have a particular influence on gender identities because they are viewed at a time when children are in the process of developing their individual identities. Moreover, gender identity is a pervasive social classification that is established early in childhood and is an important aspect of self-esteem.

In order to build a gender-equal literature learning environment, it is important to consider the attitudes of both authors and teachers when selecting children's books. Ideally, all children's books used in classrooms should have well-rounded male and female characters. That is to say, teachers should select books in which individuals have distinct personalities regardless of their genders. Characters' achievements should not be evaluated on the basis of gender, and females should not always be portrayed



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as weaker and more delicate than males. In addition, teachers may choose books that have counter-sexist attitudes embedded in them. For example, feminist texts can help children recognize gender-stereotypical messages. Also, combining traditional and non-traditional books can spark discussion of how genders are portrayed in different books that promote gender-neutral attitudes

### A History of Children's Literature

Ever since children have learned to read, there has been children's literature. As a term, "children's literature" does not easily fit into any cultural or academic category; rather, it is a diverse and paradoxical area of study. Its richness is reflected in the vast amount of theories that permeate and surround the term. From feminist studies to new historicism, literary theory places the child/text/context relationship on varying ideological and political axes. The reconceptualization of its history and the postmodern growth of radical alternative literary "histories" further complicate a retelling of the history of children's literature. Consequently, it becomes not only a difficult but also a contentious task to both identify general features that constitute children's literature and trace its history. But it is because its boundaries are so ambiguous that children's literature is so exciting and rich.

Defining children's literature initially seems simple: literature for children. Yet, identifying the parameters of the term "literature", has caused "oceans of ink" to be spilt. And, crucially, what does it mean "literature for children"? If it is "for" children, is it still a children's book if it is read by adults or if it is an "adult" book also read by children? Indeed, one of the key problems of defining "children's literature" is that adult and children's literature constantly slip into each other. If these two terms present a problem, then "children" alone proves to be equally problematic. Childhood changes from place and time and can be radically different in non-Western countries. Children's literature is a "category of books the existence of which absolutely depends on supported relationships with a particular reading audience: children," then children's literature is defined by audience in a way other literature tends not to be. Yet if we argue that a recognizable children's literature requires a recognizable childhood, then children's literature as a formal category would go back only as far as the eighteenth century when the concept of "childhood" was philosophically created.

With the advent of computer-based reproduction techniques in the latter part of the twentieth century, the once tedious and expensive process of full color reproduction was revolutionized, and now almost any original media can be successfully translated into picture book form. Although many artists continue to work with traditional media such as printmaking, pen and ink, photography, and paint, they have been joined by artists who work with paper sculpture, mixed media constructions, and computer graphics.

The changes in literature for older children have been equally important. Among the early and lasting contributions to literature for children were works by Jack London, Mark Twain, Rudyard Kipling, Edgar Allan Poe, Robert Louis Stevenson, and Hans Christian Andersen. These writers, however, considered adults their major audience; therefore, they directed only some of their literary efforts toward young readers. Today, large numbers of highly talented authors have turned to younger readers for an audience and direct most, if not all, of their writings to them.



Another major change in publishing for children has been the rise in multicultural children's literature. Prior to the mid-twentieth century the world depicted in children's books was largely a white world. If characters from a nonwhite culture appeared in children's books they were almost always badly stereotyped. The civil rights movement alerted publishers and the reading public to the need for books that depicted the America of all children, not just a white majority. Although the percentage of children's books by and about people of color does not equate with their actual population numbers, authors of color have made major contributions to a more multiculturally balanced world of children's books.

The twentieth and twenty-first centuries have seen a great increase in the diversity in children's books, from picture books to flap books to online multimedia texts. Multimedia is opening up exciting new possibilities in children's literature today and, in a few years' time; children's books may appear in ways we can hardly imagine. According to Peter Hunt (1995), children's books are becoming less "literary and reflective" and more "dynamic," which perhaps is a reflection of competition from other media. He also suggests that internationalism in the form of the Internet may modify writing for children. Still, the international success of Philip Pullman's *His Dark Materials* trilogy and J.K Rowling's *Harry Potter* series suggest that traditional children's books are healthy and lasting.

### Conclusion : Rationale for Children's Literature

The benefits of holistic learning are noted by Cove & Love (1996). "Integration of intellectual, social and emotional aspects" (Brooks & Brooks, 1993) is vital for successful learning. Children's literature addresses all of these miens

Research has demonstrated that the consolidation of the role of children's literature will produce benefits to the development of language, and thus literacy. Critical thinking will be enhanced, as will the learners' engagement in their learning.

The rich variety of material offered by children's literature stimulates language growth, and thus improves the learners' empowerment by increasing communication skills

In addition, children's literature enables equity and access issues to be addressed. The needs of the individual are acknowledged; appropriate action is possible in responding to the individual differences between learners.

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## *Der Struwwelpeter*: A Story in The Context of Civilizing

Marli Merker Moreira

Heinrich Hoffmann launched *Der Struwwelpeter*, in 1844, as a hand-written and illustrated book of children's tales for his son and his own family consumption. However, because of the impact of these illustrations and stories in verse had on his relatives and, especially on Loening, a publisher, who together with Rütten decided to get what Hoffmann entitled *Urmanuskript* published, in 1845. It was an instant success, and in some weeks the 1500 copies were sold out.

It was only two years later, in 1847, that the boy, with his straggly hair and long, grimy nails, made the book cover showing himself off on that yellow pedestal. His story, though, is the only one, among the cast of other characters, which the storyteller does not narrate. Readers and young listeners-like myself-have probably asked along these almost 170 years, since its publication, how Struwwelpeter has been punished, since all the others have. I recalled asking my grandmother why we could not know the end of Struwwelpeter's story: after all, he was so prominent in the book that he stood on what looked like a fancy bench-on its cover. Unfortunately, neither my family nor research could offer me those answers, although the fact that in the *Urmanuskrip* (the hand-made copy) the braggish figure of the shockheaded boy with dirty long nails appeared in the last page might suggest that Hoffmann intended to complete it, which-until serious research proves it-he never did.

The first translation into English, which most attribute to Hoffmann himself, appeared in 1848, but the most famous one was made by Mark Twain, in 1891, who considered this book one of the best books for children ever. He might be right about this for up to the present day more than fifteen million copies have been sold.

### 1. *Der Struwwelpeter*: conceptions and misconceptions

Those stories, like fairy-tales in general, are instituted models, or social institutions, that are conventionalized as patterns that lead to a dual life, as they are, at the same time, part of the outside social life and representations of individual human experience, which, in turn, bestows youngsters with internal representations out of which they can construct conventional-or not-mental models for both the stories and illustrations that have inspired fear to young listeners and readers.

Zipes (2002) states that fairy-tales "reflect the conditions, ideas, tastes, and values of the societies in which they were created"(2). He stresses that oral tales that circulated inside a community and extended their realm to others by the journeymen-later called traders and, even later, salesmen-had as a subjacent purpose to "stabilize, conserve, or challenge common beliefs, laws, values, and norms of a group" (8), and, eventually, of groups in a whole geographical and/or political area, such as Europe. That is why, to an extent, it is difficult to affirm that those tales are true creations of a specific group or narrator: "no fairy-tale is ever new"(9). They derive from retellings of the same, or similar, stories to which additional characters (good or evil, or neither good nor evil), scenes, and plot structure according to new or old world views and to changes in perception of the ideas permeating the context of storytelling-writing, reading, and listening.

It might be appropriate to stress some dates to avoid ending up with unsound hypotheses, such as some presented by Chalou (2007) about ideas that probably

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underlie the stories of *Der Struwwelpeter*: Heinrich Hoffmann wrote and illustrated it as a Christmas gift for his three-year old son, in 1844; Charles Darwin published his *Origin of Species*, in 1859; Sigmund Freud was born in 1856. Then, it is impossible to say that Hoffmann has been under the spell of these famous scientists.

There were doubts about the originality of Hoffmann's creation in my family, since most of them had also read Wilhelm Busch's *Max und Moritz*, published in Germany, in 1865, using sequences of drawings that could be considered a forerunner of the comic strip. As grandmother and her sister did not heed to publishing dates, for them *Max und Moritz* had affected Hoffmann. However, they were mistaken because there had been two decades of precedence in the publication of *Der Struwwelpeter*.

Although it is not the goal of this article to establish a comparison between the tales of *Struwwelpeter* and the twins *Max and Moritz*, there are striking similarities between them. In addition, the illustrations can be said to resemble each other, in some drawing traits, and stories in both books can fit the category of cautionary tales. Their main goal is to warn children about the dangerous consequences that inappropriate behavior and manners can end up inflicting upon them, if they do not follow the explicit and implicit caution signs those tales contain.

Children who heed to the admonitions, which pack those stories and illustrations, and who avoid actions and inactions linked to the characters in those tales, can get a civilized life within their family and community.

A feature of cautionary tales is the development of characters that present a rupture in social parameters: *Struwwelpeter* and the twins *Max and Moritz* were depicted as examples of bad boys. This term means that the patterns of their attitudes and actions were not accepted by the German (European) society in 19th century.

Their misbehaviors affected citizens who did not fit into the standards of those people Hawthorne had called, in his tales, the good men and good women of society that, in spite of their phony righteous stance, wanted to serve as role models for the community, in which they considered themselves the chosen few, or the ones with the right to salvation.

However, when they were on their own, far from the scrutiny of their equals, there was no warranty for their godly behavior. In this perspective, those who caution children to be civilized, that is, to perform according to the rules of the society to which they belong-European (or Puritan America, in Hawthorne's texts)-probably do not have the moral right to restrain youngsters. If they do so, these children and youngsters might become frauds like these constraining adults. Civilizers, in Hawthorne's view (though he did not use this term to qualify them), can be, in fact, totally deprived of moral values, so that they do not have the authority to impose themselves upon others, in this case, children.

*Struwwelpeter* and *Max and Moritz* disrupted the surface harmony of their communities, and had to be punished according to precepts of their time and place: *Struwwel* needed to stand, all by himself, on a platform, as an exhibit, so that everybody could stare at his untidy and peculiar hairdo, his long, sooty, and grimy nails. As in the picture, the platform is decorated with combs and pairs of scissors as signs that a high member of the adult group will make the boy clean, with his nails clean and short, his hair cut and neat, and his overall appearance acceptable to those who

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wanted to pass on to others the façade of impeccable adults. Struwwel's 'crime' had been slovenliness, and it had to be 'fixed', at least, by public exposure. As mentioned before, Hoffmann just left this character on that stand with verses that described its sorry state, without a story about its fate.

Wilhelm Busch's *Max and Moritz* committed seven petty-or not so petty-crimes. The two boys, with crusts of bread and a thread, prepare a trap, killing Widow Bolte's chickens causing her to cry a lot. She, then, decides to roast the birds in her hearth, but when they are brownish and ready to be eaten, the two boys, with a fishing gear, steal the delicious chickens. Later, they resolve to saw the plank that serves as a bridge to tailor Böck, whom they lure to cross it, so that he nearly drowns. Next victim is teacher Lämpel, whose pipe they fill with gunpowder, and, when the teacher lights it, he is blasted unconsciously. Uncle Fritz is the next sufferer for they fill his bed with ladybugs that crawl all over him, right when he is falling asleep. Their sixth prank involves the local baker, whose pretzels they have planned to steal, but because they tumble into a drum of dough, they are placed into the hot oven and baked, only enough to let them eat their way out of the crust. The seventh, and last trick, is their pitfall: they hide in the grain silo of farmer Mecke, and, to make him furious, they cut open some grain sacks, but someone sees them and, immediately, places them in the sacks to be milled and ground. Their tricks and pranks end dramatically as bits of grain inside the ducks' stomachs, and the worst part of it is that nobody grieves them.

As a child, I remember asking my great-grandmother, "Why didn't the boys get punished after each bad thing they had done? Why did they have to die by being turned into duck's feed?" I loved *Max and Moritz*, but I never wanted to listen to the narrative of their last trick, not even to look at the illustrations: they gave me nightmares.

I intend to stress that violence seemed to be part of the process of civilizing children, and stories served as a tool to achieve such objective. The story of *Max and Moritz* is mentioned here as another example of popular children's stories in the 19th century Germany: it shares some commonalities with *Der Struwwelpeter*-both have shown different forms of violence adults use to set those kids right. Heinrich Hoffmann's book, *Der Struwwelpeter*, presents a collection of stories that, as a reader and especially as a listener (and carefully observer of the many details of their colorful illustrations) has always called my attention to how close to each other they are in what concerns the violent developments that happen from cautioning to actual punishment.

*Der Struwwelpeter* constitutes the focal point, though other German stories (some by the brothers Grimm and by Busch) may be cited to serve as instances of those cautionary tales that constituted instruments for restraining children, to get them into what German society of those days considered *the right path*, that is, the *civilized* way of life in a social context.

This article will aim at answering two basic questions: What is the meaning of *civilize/civilization* in the context of German society of the 19th century? What does *civilizing* entail in that given context?

## 2. Personal experience of being civilized

*Der Struwwelpeter* belongs to the broad range of the category fairy tales, together with those of Grimm's, for example. Curiously, *Max and Moritz*, by Busch, are very seldom defined as fairy tales, though they are very close to Hoffmann's stories.

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As a young child, my great-grandmother, who was German, told me all those stories, as grim as they were, without saying anything about their authors. I felt sorry for the poor girls that had been wicked to their half-sister (Cinderella), because they ended up with chopped off parts of their feet-they wanted the slipper to fit them-and each with just one eye, since the other had been squeezed out of its socket by a bird. I could not understand brutality as a solution for the sisters' wrongdoings. In fact, that final blow of violence was a lot worse than anything bad they had done before.

Hoffmann brings two nightmarish stories to my mind and ears: *The Sad Tale of the Match-Boxes* and *The story of Thumb-Sucker*. Paulinchen was a little girl who loved to play with matches in spite of everything her parents her admonished her about what could happen to her. One day, when she was all by herself (with only the two cats, Mintz and Mountz, for company), she started waltzing and laughing while striking a box of matches. Suddenly, the flames caught on her clothes and consumed her. Her shoes stood there as the only reminder of Paulinchen's existence.

The other tale, *Thumb-Sucker*, does not end in death, but in amputation. The little boy, Konrad, spent the day sucking at his thumbs. His mother hated it and warned him with possible horrifying outcomes, such as the mad tailor with his shears to snip off Konrad's thumbs. Well, there he was, alone in the house sucking his thumb, when this dreadful figure, with an enormous pair of scissors, approached him and snipped them off square. Konrad yelled while blood spurted from where his thumbs had been. I covered my head with my eiderdown, but a great sense of injustice filled my heart: why had those kids to undergo so much suffering for things most children, just like myself, enjoy doing? Why was it so wrong to suck one's thumb? Playing with matches was, and is, dangerous, but who is not attracted to their lights? Here, might come to light the main reason for this article-the suffering kids in those children's tales, especially of those who have marked my life, and caused many bad dreams and fears.

### 3. Contextualizing the reading behind *Der Struwwelpeter*

At home we spoke German, because my great-grandmother did not speak Portuguese fluently for she had come from Germany at eighteen, so German authors covered the bookshelves. From those, *Der Struwwelpeter*, *Max and Moritz*, and the imposing Wilhelm Busch book with his complete stories had a prominent place: visitors could not miss them.

We were German-Brazilians that, within the limits of home, interacted in German, since the use of that language in public had undergone serious sanctions by the Brazilian government: the area (São Leopoldo in the state of Rio Grande do Sul) in which we lived-I still live there-had been the seat of German colonization in Brazil that started in 1824.

In 1938, religious services and school activities in German were strictly forbidden. However, in the 1950's, when the heat of government acts against what had been known as the German menace had calmed down, although when my sisters and I walked back from school-dressed in dirndls and our blond hair in braids-the kids from a public school yelled at us, "Fifth-column! Fifth-column!". We could never get used to this, and those names-we did not understand the reason to get such a label because we had been born in Brazil. However, this fact, along the months, caused a trauma: I seldom spoke German again.



Those stories, nevertheless, continue to be part of my reading history, and I had their warnings glued to my beliefs about what a good young girl should be. I respected and follow the pieces of advice of my family and I was always neatly dressed and combed, with my nails short and clean. Moreover, I kept away from matches and I ate everything adults put on my plate. I never sucked my thumbs. When relatives came to visit, they stated, "This girl is precious! She has such good manners!" Well, all I can say is that I had been civilized.

Thus, I am writing from the perspective of a reader and listener in response to this type of literature, adding to it knowledge I have been constructing on the subject through research (in authors such as ZIPES, and and ELIAS).

#### 4. Remembrances of Struwwelpeter, Paulinchen, and Kaspar

The first illustration I remember is of a boy with long and rumpled hair, long and dirty nails. He was scruffy because he repelled adults who wanted him to look like the other nice and well-behaved boys, in school and church. Paradoxically, it attracted me and, at the same time, I hated it, since I associated to it an early elementary school teacher who used that boy's name to label her students, according to Struwwel's unaccepted features. She examined our hair, ears, nails, and cleanliness and, then, proceeded to separate us into two groups: *the Struwwels* and *the Good Children*. What can be revealing is the fact that everybody in that classroom knew the character and could understand the meaning of his/her label-and the punishment beyond the bad label.

Hoffmann had not dreamed that this book would have triggered such kind of violence. That is, violence with a bearing on real children, not on his paper and ink characters more than a century after he brought them to life, when his book was published. The group of *Struwwels* was the ones that lacked refinement, or civilization; the *Good Children* represented civilized boys and girls.

Actually, there were three stories I feared, though I asked granny and Oma (great-grandmother) to tell them over and over again: Struwwelpeter, Soupy-Kaspar, and Paulinchen. Today, I cannot offer any good reason for those choices, but only children in the 1950's might have these answers.

In fact, the less troublesome tale, which does actually not exist, is the one about the messy boy. I abhorred the midwife's pair of scissors with which my granny cut my nails. Compared to the deaths of Paulinchen and Kaspar, Struwwel was a piece of cake. Having one's nails cut, though, is a very basic fear most children have, and it is in these inherent fears (violence, illness, and death) that *Der Struwwelpeter* strives on and on, while, at the same time, children seem to be tempted to read and/or listen to its stories repeatedly.

As I was a finicky eater, Kaspar became an icon, with his little tombstone on which an empty bowl stood in the most absolute loneliness. I retorted that the boy might have been ill, perhaps with diphtheria-one of my sisters was convalescing from it. However, anyway, I forced myself to gulp down vegetables and legumes out of pure fright of an untimely death and its forsakenness. In addition, I do not recall, as a child, to have, at least once, played with matches, although their magic fire mesmerized me.

#### 5. *Struwwelpeter*: a brief history of the book

Christmas time, 1844, and Dr. Heinrich Hoffmann, medical doctor in Frankfurt,

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wanted to buy a gift for his three-year old son. However, nothing seemed adequate. He wanted a special book. When he got home, he started drawing and writing it; he was a poet and he was used to drawing to distract his young patients so that he could examine them and give them a satisfactory treatment. He finished it shortly, and gave it to his little boy. In 1845, 1500 issues of it were published and they sold out in four weeks ([http:// www.ardennes.com](http://www.ardennes.com)).

Today, almost 170 years later, this book that was known, in the south of Brazil, by German-Brazilian families, as a *lustich buch*-an entertaining book-for children, whose parents and caregivers believed the little ones could learn from it how not to behave and, also, laugh or be frightened with its illustrations, became a source of ideological issues and of sociopolitical transformations. Authors and illustrators, such as Friedrich Karl Waechter, created the *Anti-Struwwelpeter*, based on the original 1846 edition by Hoffmann. Children in Waechter's book (1970) are autonomous, that is, they do not need the cautionary words and actions of adults. They know what they should and should not do.

There is another writer and illustrator, Manfred Bofinger, who makes *Struwwelpeter* a neo-Nazi youngster with revolutionary ideas, though adapting and deconstructing the original words and illustrations. The book cover shows a soldier ready for action, on that platform that appears in Hoffmann's front cover of *Der Struwwelpeter*. Those two versions stand as mere examples of a variety of different versions of *Der Struwwelpeter*, each one of them attending to purposes that varied according to the social and/or ideological context of the writer/illustrator's *heimat* (homeland).

As a dramatic instance of this, Rosendahl (2008) points out that Robert and Philip Spence, two British soldiers interested in raising war relief funds (in this case, bedding, food, cigarettes, dart boards dominoes, playing cards, and entertaining material for the soldiers) during World War II, started working on what became *Struwwelhitler: A Nazi Story Book by Dr. Schrecklichkeit*. Illustrations, then, replace most of the characters with a Hitler-like figure. He, actually, is the main character of many stories, sharing with other of his *kamaraden*-Goebbels, Hess, Mussolini, and others-the roles in those awkwardly funny and mocking stories. Again, the rhythm, words, and illustrations parody Hoffmann quite closely, by using the elements of these stories, such as the book cover, inkpot, and the flying boy.

However interesting that variety of versions, parodies, or imitations might be, they are here to emphasize that a story can be changed according to its social, cultural, and historical background. Sometimes, only its interpretation undergoes a process of transformation, since comprehension (reading and listening) depends on a number of variables, such as: time (of writing x reading/ listening); space/ locus (author and reader and/or listener); context (historical, geographic, and social; history of reading and/ listening; belief systems).

It seems natural that *Der Struwwelpeter* has changed across almost two centuries of discoveries, inventions, wars, crises, ideologies, new maps of the world; advances in communication technology; new family and school frameworks. Rosendahl (2008) writes that "30 million copies of the German version have been sold in recent years, and the book has been translated into 70 German dialects and 40 different languages. [...] *Struwwelpeter*'s popularity seems to increase with the years. While it may be not the



6. Is *Der Struwwelpeter* a civilizing book?

This book with narratives in verses and illustrated with caricaturesque drawings has, according to Shore (1996), a pedagogical goal: to lead children to follow rules and routines already taken for granted as the right ones in society. Punishment of various sorts characterizes those tales: wounds; public exposure; accidents and death.

The notion of a social mind based on external models (in this specific case, the examples of reverse patterns of attitudes, behavior, and manners of which the author cautions about their dangers) represent social facts, that is, "realities external to the individual" (26). These external models exist in a social context of a community, whose set of models as public artifacts comprise their culture(s). So, tales happen within a culture with a diversity of cultural models and patterns experimented by a community, or by outsiders in relation to this community.

Geertz (1973) calls them instituted models that are similar to templates for different social institutions, such as greetings, fairy-tales, manners, calendars, and even perfumes or aromas. They belong both to the social world outside and are, at the same time, products of intentional behavior, as they externalize, in the social world, individual, or particular, modes of being (51).

Bruner (1990) believes that tales as narratives exist to help in bringing about meaning related to unusual, or peculiar, behavior. Tales, thus, aim at intentionally finding ruptures in the accepted expressions of culture(s). However unconventional this may seem, *Der Struwwelpeter's* stories cradled little children to sleep since their frightening structure-rule+ disobedience+ punishment +bad outcome-could, at the same time, comfort those who had decided upon following the rules of society and be free of being chastised, and, on the other hand, they could inspire nightmares, and insomnia, in those who were not sure whether they had really been well-behaved (59).

The idea of social model, or instituted model, that predominates in small or large communities (the German colonies in the south of Brazil in the 1950's, Germany, and Europe, for example) is contained within parameters that define what constitutes social routines and behaviors. Breaking away from them can have undesired outcomes, such as disobedience, rebellion, disempowerment of rulers, uncontrolled segments of society, school indiscipline, domestic and urban disorganization, among other things that build up serious obstacles to those that believed themselves as more equal than the others (Orwell, 1982). In *Animal Farm*, some personified animals are civilized to help promote the new government by Napoleon, the pig that ended up as the chief of the Farm, and this is done through training: the sheep disappeared to come back later bleating, all the time, propaganda of the regime; Moses, the raven, while animals labored in the struggle not to die, hovered over them croaking words of comfort inducing them to believe that the more they labored and toiled, the closer they would be to Paradise. In other words, if they disobeyed the social order set by the government, there would be a terrible consequence; if they followed the commandments, a wonderful promised land would be awaiting for them.

This perspective may fit the process of getting civilized, specifically meaning in Orwell's story-which is not a fairy-tale, though children may think it is-the process of training these personified animals, mostly through the astute use of language, topped



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with abusive penalizing treatments to guarantee the permanence of the desired state of affairs for those in power.

Zipes (1983) confirms what was mentioned before, because he defines cautionary or civilizing narratives as the ones that work through threats followed by punishments, which can derive directly from the performed misdemeanors (playing with matches and catching fire; not eating and starving to death) or from external forces (the big pair of scissors that amputates the boy's thumbs). At the same time, fairy-tales can be subversive, that is, liberating and emancipating. He (21) states that a sort of equivalent of the man of the court, in the 17th and 18th centuries, became the *civilized* man from the 19th century on.

Civilizing the common *person-on-the-streets*, especially when he/she is a child, according to Elias (1998), is necessary because children are not born as *civilized* human beings (p.266), so they need to undergo a *civilizing process* to become responsible citizens in their communities. Whereas Mazlish (2004) contends that all forms of *civilizing* processes can be considered expressions of domination (p. xiv). He sums up his thoughts stating that *civilization* can be understood in opposition to *not being a barbarian* (72).

Applying these points to *Der Struwwelpeter*, and adding to it my own experience as someone in constant contact with it in my childhood, it can be said that this book was utilized for more than a century as one more instrument available to empowered adults to *civilize* children, so as to help to mold them in conformity to the dominant culture, its precepts, beliefs, and rules. An issue that requires further research has to do with Heinrich Hoffmann's intentions: did he really want to restrain his characters, who celebrated a different kind of freedom, and transform them into robot-like creatures that could be just *one more brick in the wall* or just another sausage on the assembly line, in Pink Floyd's *The Wall* (1979)? Otherwise, what would have motivated him to write and illustrate a book for his son, since all other children's books in bookstores, since according to Hoffmann's opinion, were repetitious and inappropriate?

## Not-so-final remarks

These questions would probably go on unanswered: How does *Der Struwwelpeter* intend to *civilize*? Which of its features can integrate the term/concept *civilize* related to children?

In this article, however, we can try to offer an orthodox answer: *Der Struwwelpeter* has been for more than a century used as another tool to *civilize* children, through threats and punishments that illustrate and permeate its pages. Civilized children act according to parameters set by the dominant society, or culture. On the other hand, today it might be banished from libraries and bookstores because it seems to encourage the practice of all sorts of violence by adults upon children, which, in accordance to the Declaration of Human Rights and government laws, is strictly forbidden and punished, independently of the author's intentions.

I believe the first question is very hard to answer because there is no evidence that this author has not intended his book to be used as an instrument of the civilizing, or westernizing, processes. Further intensive and extensive research is needed, if we really think this is a relevant inquiry question in the area of literary fairy-tales. The document-*Der Struwwelpeter*-seems to point out to an affirmative answer. Is it really



affirmative? Furthermore, *Der Struwwelpeter* is a representation of the ways of thinking about child and adult possibilities of interaction in the social and historical context of the 1840's, in Germany.

What matters here are not so much the speculations about this *to be or not to be* the question, but the stories themselves and the impact they have had-I do not think that they would cause much reverberation today, depending, of course, on who deals with them, and the purposes this person might have in mind. Unfortunately, there are families that still apply to their children the rules of behavior and manners presented in this book, though they have never read it: they want children to follow the right path of social behavior. Their children's life can become easier when they passively submit themselves to the constraints and disempowerment comprised in the civilizing process.

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# Children's Literature: Delineating an Eternal Mindscape

Muralikrishnan T R

## Introduction :

This article focuses on the scope of creative writing with necessary appropriation for children's needs in the context of emerging liberalized world order. The distinction which the pre-70s made was that a child's book is a book read by a child and an adult book is book read by an adult. However with the changing world order children started reading the book of adults to get what they could understand. The scenario of literature never proposed as such what the intended audience should be. It was more of the societal didactic structures and systems that put them in rigid water-tight compartments. Children always aspired to imitate the adults and yearned to get the freedom of the adults. The popular saying, "A child is not a child in an adult world but an adult is a child in a child's world" holds true in creative writing especially meant for children.

What makes children's literature unique? It is because it lies in the audience that it addresses. The writers of children's literature are constrained by the limitations that the so-called 'childhood themes' impose but that itself is the challenge in the creative process. The experiences are vast and varied but they should 'connect' with the present and future generations. The writer needs to understand the complicated psycho-social perceptions of the kid generation- what instills in them a sense of wonder, awe, love, terror, and fantasy. Here in this domain much is known but little is explained. The post-modern child who is obsessed with Turtwig, Chimchar and Piplup of *Pokemon* adventures needs somebody to share his/her frustrations. The challenge of the writer is to go beyond the predictable routine of moralistic narrative and to share with the children the grim reality of life. It is indeed necessary to take the child through the varieties that the life provides and to respond to them with critical insight. Children need to realize that the basic human emotions are the same but only the settings change.

## Content and universal appeal

The content of the children's literature has its own limitations. Few of them have the background to perceive psychological probing as in *To the Light house*, business scams as in *Wall Street*, political intrigue as in *All the King's Men*, or sexual exploits as in *Lady Chatterley's Lover*. But they have an uncanny ability to read murder mystery of horror stories as exemplified by the sheer popularity of Nancy Drew, Hardy Boys and of late the Harry Potter series. Jerome Bruner (1959) has stressed upon the need for literary experiences among children: "I would urge that a grasp of the basic plights through the basic myths of art and literature provides the organizing principles by which knowledge of the human condition is rendered into a form that makes thinking possible, by which we go beyond learning to the use of knowledge".

The universality of certain recurrent themes and treatment of subject has been put to critique. In the present postmodern era, few would agree with the representation of 'grand narratives', universal and centralized themes. But a few children's literature of distinction has conveyed quite successfully themes of simple and clear universal values and truths without compromising on childhood appeal. Beatrice Hurley has aptly put it like this: "The scope of literature includes stories of real people of today and yesterday;



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realistic and fiction tales; stories of animals, machines and inventions; stories dealing with the world of nature; stories depicting everyday experiences of children at home and abroad; stories of myth and magic, of fools and silly dolts; tall tales of legendary heroes whose audacious feats afford children a peep into the folklore of a nation; biographies of men and women who have made their indelible imprint upon the history of a nation; books of poetry that sing their way into the lives of boys and girls".(56)

### Creativity and children's perception

It is important to link creative writing for children with the perception of creativity prevalent among children. Most theories of child development view young children as highly creative, with a natural tendency to fantasize, experiment, and explore their physical and conceptual environment. However this high level of creativity is not necessarily maintained throughout childhood and into adulthood. The level of creativity declines when they start the kindergarten and peaks again when they reach puberty.

In this context, the question is, as adults do we encourage their creativity? If the answer is in the affirmative, how do we go about it?

\* Creating an environment that permits the child to explore and play under no restraints.

\* Accept and recognize unusual/unorthodox ideas from children

\* Use creative problem solving in all parts of academic and non academic spheres

\* Children find it hard to be creative without any objectified material inspiration.

\* Emphasize the activity, the creative process rather than the product.

\* Wary of barriers to creativity.

### Objectives of Children's literature

Human beings have a basic need to live life to a fuller extent than the limits of their immediate and direct experience make possible. For children particularly it is in their nature to grow, to stretch minds and horizons, to exercise a power that can extend their actual experience, to be part of a group, to feel the cohesive quality that binds friends who share common interests to derive a feeling of achievement, to laugh and play, to seek their own sense of aesthetic satisfaction through enjoyment of beauty and to explore the possibilities of upcoming future.

Mathew (1990) has outlined the aims of children's literature thus;

- a. To afford many opportunities for child to explore his world in an infinite number of ways- of seeing, of thinking and of feeling,
- b. To nourish the eyes and heart: to invite a child to savour life in a different world, to feel the emotions of someone else and to view the familiar in a bright new way,
- c. To transmit sound moral values and attitudes communicated through characters in children's books,
- d. To provide experiences that sharpen a child's insight into self as he searches and encounters that self in stories that allow for identification,



- e. To serve as vital link in preserving and communicating the humanistic tradition from one generation into another,
- f. To broaden aesthetic perception and give an understanding of form and order through language, ideas, and the visual art of picture books,
- g. To explore varied contributions, values, ways of life in different culture-past and present-to give a sense of universal life,
- h. To provide for children experiences outside their limited environment-experiences that can be enjoyed vicariously in gaining some of the enchantment of life and a measure of personal fulfillment,
- i. To stress themes of natural interest to childhood: dependent, however upon the extent to which they have been developed through structure and style, with beauty and vitality, and with the essential ingredient: a genius for storytelling.

### The relevance of mindscape and contemporary world

The conventional history of literature has positioned this form of literature to a corner with the assumption that only that portion of literature that possessed appeal for children be included in the realm of children's literature. The child gets new and fresh ideas as he/she reads it through various stages of development. During this expansion of the experiential mindscape, he/she grows in stature. There shall be better reception of ideas and certain permanent values and systems find a place in the mindscape of the growing child. Now the significant question to be addressed is whither is the genre of children's literature now?

The challenge before the new writers of children's literature is that it is difficult to create a "world of a child" with contemporary relevance. The writers who attempt this will have to necessarily create a world by going back to their own childhood, consciously or unconsciously. Works of Beatrix Potter (*The Tale of Peter Rabbit*), Tetsuko Kuroyanagi (*Totto-chan*), P C Gopalan, (Malayalam writer, famous for his 'The world of Unnikuttan') stand examples for those yesteryears which represented faithfully or imaginatively an innocent childhood they aspired.

The tastes of children place some demands upon the writer's style. Children tend to want action in their stories and prefer a style that has movement rather than too much description or contemplation. Children also require conversation in their stories. They feel as Alice did when she looked into her sister's book and said, "What is the use of a book without pictures or conversation?" The graphic novels *Blood Star* by Richard Corben (adapted from a story by Robert E. Howard) George Metzger's *Beyond Time and Again* could be seen as a later age response to this. Until 1960s illustrations in children's books in India were limited to line illustrations printed in black. Shanker's books *Life with Grandfather* and *Sujata and the wild elephants* shall prove this point. However, with the advent of technology things transformed completely.

But the new world order seems to have made things problematic. Many of the present writers do not get aesthetically connected with new sensibilities. The non-linear, digital, interactive hypermedia has taken the present children by a storm so that good old narrative "Once upon a time" does not satisfy them at all. The hypermedia gives them greater sense of control and they can move freely rather than feeling constrained about by the system. The mindscape of the present elite generation has been seized by the virtual and the unreal with no universal/perennial values. The PlayStation programs satisfy them with reading and once own creative imagination



taking a back seat. However critics such as Mike Edwards (2003) have pointed out the issues already: "It can also be a recipe for mindless, sensation seeking and titillation. It is possible to click until the user finds something worthy of attention, which may not impart any useful information. The screen can become the equivalent of 'moving wall paper' or a source of endless stimulation employing a range of senses (synaesthesia) in the domestic sphere". Further, this artificial demand for the use of techno-oriented fantasies has created many cyborgs in popular culture such as Android 17 and Android 18, along with Android 20 from the anime-manga series *Dragon Ball Z*.

The society and the nation are always on the move hence it is not always proper for a writer to write on the basis of his/her own experiences. A writer cannot sit in authority and stress that the child for whom he/she writes has much to learn. They are so much obsessed with the idea of educating them in the name of character building and other things and consider it their pious duty to make them socially useful. It is a serious mistake and as Shaw observed it, "The vilest abortionist is he who attempts to mould a child's character." Hence it is important not to be prescriptive in children's literature. He/she should willingly enter the mindscape of the child with an idea of no return. The writer has to accept the supremacy of the child in his own world. If he/she fails to recognize the essence of the vibrant mindscape it is not something the child should be blamed about. The need is to detoxify the mind from outdated value systems and help them to come out from bias and prejudices. Literature by itself is an art form that liberates and lock-up people. The child may be too young to read into the ideological underpinnings of the literary text but the mature writer can make sure that what he/she provides is value-free. The depiction of the contemporary world should not be sub-real and hyper-real. The child is good enough to interpret his/her world.

### Conclusion

As Mohammed (1990) says all ideal literature do not make children's literature. Any literature that is not ideal and perfect will not become children's literature. Those who write for children play with fire which may either spread light or burn or destroy everything. It is important for the writers to get closer to the mindscape of the present day children and address them according to their sensibilities. That will make it realistic and help the gen-next to get back to reading and critically responding to newer challenges of life.

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## Contesting the Adult Discourse:

### A Reading of *Swami and Friends* as Children's Literature

Rakesh Desai

Children's literature is a complex genre. Contributors to children's literature are always adults. Further, a text meant primarily for adults could be read by children, if the theme and characters in the text present children's viewpoint. And a text meant primarily for children could be read by adults to revisit their own childhood. Further, the notion of childhood itself is often constructed. Children's literature could be divided into various kinds in terms of its function and scope. Radhika Menon, Managing Editor of Tulika Publishers, devoted to children's publications, refer to various categories of children's literature: "socially conscious" (with "didactic" function), "melting pot" (focusing on "the universal ignoring subcultural differences") and "culturally relevant" ("presenting realistic images"). Then she refers to one more category of children's books:

There is a fourth category: books written not specifically for children but which would be enjoyed by them. Here we would find the *Panchatantra*, the *Jataka tales*, *Alice in Wonderland*, *Peter Pan* and many of the popular folk stories and nursery rhymes of the world. The works of writers such as Sukumar Ray, Satyajit Ray, Rabindranath Tagore, R. K. Narayan, Ashokamitra, Basheer (in regional languages), Salman Rushdie, Vikram Sheth, Ruskin Bond talk to readers, young and old at different levels, in different voices.

(Menon: 2000)

R. K. Narayan's *Swami and Friends* (1935), belonging to the fourth category, make itself available to children, though it is primarily meant for adult readers, as his other novels. Further, Tina L. Hanlon derives characteristics of the genre of children's literature, referring to Perry Nodelman's *The Pleasures of Children's Literature* (1992): "simple and straightforward," a focus on "action," about "childhood," expressing "a child's point of view," "optimistic," tending towards "fantasy," a "form of pastoral idyll," viewing "an un-idyllic world from the viewpoint of innocence," "repetitious," tending "to balance the idyllic and the didactic" (Hanlon, "Characteristics of Children's Literature as a Genre").

*Swami and Friends* narrates in the third person, largely from a child's viewpoint, escapades and adventures of Swaminathan, a student of the First Form, studying in Albert Mission School, Malgudi, and his friends, mainly Mani, physically strong, senior in age, dull at studies, and Rajam, the son of deputy superintendent of police, quite brilliant and innovative. The narrative strongly underlines a child's viewpoint: a hankering for freedom, the perceptive mode of dreams, a belief in the fantastic order of reality, an eye for potential humour, observation of the extraordinary in the ordinary, a preference to the concrete over the abstract, and the inevitable rivalry and envy among children.

The motif of freedom is prominent in the narrative. The smothering shackles of study, the use of corporal punishment make the school an anathema to Swami: he finds after the weekend holidays "Monday specially unpleasant in the calendar" and he shudders as he remembers his school, which is a "dismal yellow building; the fire-eyed Vedanayagam, his class teacher; and the Head Master with his thin long cane"

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(SF 3). The school stands for the coercive imposition of restrictions on the children's fun and freedom, and the conventional examination proves to be the ultimate evaluative mechanism of oppression. All suppressed desire and energy of the young students run amok at the end of the assembly after the annual examination:

At the end of the prayer the storm burst. With the loudest, lustiest cries, the gathering flooded out of the hall in one body.... Mani did some brisk work at the school gate, snatching from all sorts of people ink-bottles and pens, and destroying them. Around him was a crowd seething with excitement and joy. Ecstatic shrieks went up as each article of stationery was destroyed. One or two little boys feebly protested. But Mani wrenched the ink-bottles from their hands, tore their caps, and poured ink over their clothes. He had a small band of assistants, among whom Swaminathan was prominent. Overcome by the mood of the hour, he had spontaneously emptied his ink-bottle over his own head and had drawn 'frightful dark circles under his eyes with the dripping ink.

(SF 65-66)

This motif of freedom turns out to be decisively rebellious events later in Swami's life. While responding to the Head Master's rigorous interrogation regarding his absence at the school, his participation in the strike in the context of the Indian freedom struggle, and his breaking of the glass panes, Swami finds the cuts of cane intolerable, so he protests, and rushes out of the school for good: "I don't care for your dirty school" (SF 106). In the same vein, after his admission to the Board High School Swaminathan tries desperately to find time in the evening for the practice of playing cricket as the Malgudi Cricket Club's challenge to a "friendly" match is accepted by the Young Men's Union. He remains absent in his scout class and drill class after four-thirty in the evening. He gullibly takes a patronizing remark by the doctor T. Kesavan seriously and thinks that he would talk to his Head Master about his absence in the evening at his school for the cricket practice. At his encounter with the Head Master he learns too late about his absence in the drill and scout classes not accounted for:

Another moment and that vicious snake-like cane, quivering as if with life, would have descended on Swaminathan's palm. A flood of emotion swept him off his feet, a mixture of fear, resentment, and rage. He hardly knew what he was doing. His arm shot out, plucked the cane from the Head Master's hand, and flung it out of the window. Then he dashed to his desk, snatched his books, and ran out of the room. He crossed the hall and the veranda in a run, climbed the school gate because the bolt was too heavy for him, and jumped into the end of Market Road.

(SF 144)

A child's psychological responses to the adult coercion and his eventual escape are depicted in detail in a convincing way.

Children's engagement with the fantastic order of reality appears in various ways. Swaminathan's consuming passion to get a hoop, "an ex-cycle wheel without spokes or tyre," shapes itself into a dream at night:

He dreamt one night that he crossed the Sarayu near Nallappa's Grove 'on' his wheel. It was a vivid dream; the steel wheel crunched on the sandy bed of the river as it struggled and heaved across. It became a sort of horse when it reached the other bank. It went back home in one leap, took him to the kitchen, and then to his bed, and lay down beside him.

(SF 67-68)

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Further, the coachman swindles him out of eighteen pies by falsely promising two silver coins to buy eventually a hoop with. Swaminathan's approaches to the coachman to regain his money fail dismally. Even the coachman's son derides him whenever he goes there, and he begins dreaming at night "the face of the coachman's son": "And sometimes in the night would float before him a face dark, dirty and cruel, and make him shiver." (SF 75) Further, he is lost on the Mempi Forest Road while looking for the Trunk Road, and at night he imagines that all kinds of wild animals surround him and the "demons lifted him by his ears, plucked every hair on his head, and peeled off his skin from head to foot" (SF 161) Further, the cricket match which he misses in fact is imagined to have his heroic participation and he fancies avenging himself on the cruel Head Master of the Board School:

He had touched the other wicket and returned. Two runs. He stood with the bat. The captain of the Y. M. U. bowled, and he hit a sixer. The cheers were deafening. Rajam ran round the field in joy, jumped up the wall and down thrice. The next ball was bowled. Instead of hitting it, Swaminathan flung the bat aside and received it on his head. The ball rebounded and speeded back towards the bowler—the Board School Head Master; but Swaminathan ran after the ball, overtook it half-way, caught it, and raising his arm, let it go with terrific force towards the Captain's head, which was presently hit and shattered. The M. C. C. had won . . .

(SF 161-62)

Analogous with dream as a perceptive mode is the belief in the miraculous and the fantastic. Mani, a well built boy, is afraid of ghosts. He challenges Rajam to a fight at the river Sarayu. Mani thinks of breaking Rajam's head with his wooden club and throwing his body in the river, but he drops the idea lest "Rajam should come and trouble him at night as a spirit," as after "his [Mani's] grandfather's death, he was sleeping alone" (18). Further, consumed by the passion for getting a hoop, Swaminathan expects two pebbles, placed in a small cardboard box, kept in a corner of the pooja room, to turn miraculously into "two three-pie coins" (SF 70).

Though the sense of humour, often coupled with irony, is pervasive in R. K. Narayan's fiction, *Swami and Friends* employs it in the children's context also. A peculiar sense of humour, "laughter," is the "bond" between Swaminathan and Samuel, known as "Pea," as both of them are able "to see together the same absurdities and incongruities in things," the "most trivial and unnoticeable thing to others would tickle them to death" (SF 9). Sometimes childlike innocence happens to be a source of humour. Swaminathan answers a teacher's question about Indian climate: "It is hot in summer and cold in winter" (SF 16). Further, while explaining the absence in the class on the day of the strike in the school, a student offers excuses:

The fifth said that his grandmother died suddenly just as he was starting for the school. The Head Master asked him if he could bring a letter from his father. No. He had no father. Then, who was his guardian? His grandmother. But the grandmother was dead, was she not? No, it was another grandmother. The Head Master asked how many grandmothers a person could have. No answer. Could he bring a letter from his neighbours? No, he could not. None of his neighbours could read or write, because he lived in the more illiterate parts of Ellaman Street.

(SF 104)

This mode of humour makes the children's world available to the child as the reader.



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Another significant feature of children's psyche is to get interested and observe seemingly ordinary phenomena (and irrelevant in the context) from where they alone can derive wonder. Swaminathan is teased by his classmates as "Rajam's Tail" (SF 31). He comes home, sits on the pyol, and gazes into the gutter in Vinayaka Mudali Street:

A dark volume of water was rushing along. Odd pieces of paper, leaves, and sticks, floated by. A small piece of tin was gently skimming along. Swaminathan had an impulse to plunge his hand in and pick it up. But he let it go. His mind was inert. He watched the shining bit float away. It was now at the end of the compound wall; now it had passed under the tree. Swaminathan was slightly irritated when a brick obstructed the progress of the tin. He said that the brick must either move along or stand aside without interfering with the traffic. The piece of tin released itself and dashed along furiously, disappeared round a bend at the end of the street.

(SF 32)

In the same vein, when forced by his father to clean his table and read his books during vacation, he catches a spider while dusting the book covers, and even the strict father does not deter him from observing it "swinging from a strand that gleamed in a hundred delicate tints," and slips it into his pocket as his pet (SF 84). Further, having flung his cap into the bonfire, the next morning Swaminathan keeps lying in bed "watching a dusty beam of sunlight falling a few yards off his bed" (SF 96). Such observations, childlike in their apparent irrelevance in the context, not only present a child's character with psychological truth, but would also communicate well to a child reader.

Further, children's affinity for the concrete and their dislike for the abstract are evident in Swaminathan's dislike for Arithmetic class, when he feels "bored" (SF 4). Further, his father gives him a sum to do. "Rama has ten mangoes with which he wants to earn fifteen annas" and "Krishna wants only four mangoes," then "how much will Krishna have to pay?" (SF 86) Swaminathan's mouth begins "to water at the thought of mangoes" (SF 86). Then Swaminathan wants to know "the key to the whole problem," whether Rama tries to sell "ripe fruits or unripe ones" because it "would be scandalous to expect fifteen annas for ten unripe mangoes" (SF 87). Thus, Swaminathan perceives not figures, but real, concrete mangoes. Further, D. Pillai's History classes are fun to the students. In his teaching he conforms to "no canon of education," he tells the students "with a wealth of detail the private histories of Vasco da Gama, Clive, Hastings, and others," with "the clash of arms and the groans of the slain" (SF 5). It is the narration of history as story which endears it to the boys. In addition to these, the rivalry between Mani and Rajam is also quite convincing in the context of the children's world.

Though it is true that *Swami and Friends* presents pervasively a child's viewpoint in the narrative, it also embodies ambivalence, which is perhaps a prominent feature of children's literature. As Perry Nodelman points out that didacticism and optimism in children's literature leads to self-contradiction, as the former aims at teaching children to restrict the excess of their desire and action and the latter emphasizes their liberation and fulfilment, and every children's story repeats this for the reader:

I suspect, therefore, that many child readers read children's books as I do, in the consciousness of how the pleasure of their innocent point of view might be being balanced and qualified by the pleasures of a deeper knowledge to come and also with a sense that the deeper knowledge, which surfaces only toward the end of the

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story, is also going to be undercut by the innocent pleasures in the next book. ... And because the game is double, because innocence undercuts newly achieved wisdom just as much as the wisdom undercuts the innocence it theoretically supersedes, there is really no move forward or backward, no final wisdom to be achieved-no purpose in the game but the pleasure of the never-ending process.

(Nodelman 4-5)

*Swami and Friends* also offers children's fun and fulfilment on the one hand, and the need for learning lessons in life on the other hand. And the episodic structure of the narrative evidences the continuity of this process. Swami and his friends, in addition to their play and enjoyment, have also to respond to certain adult concerns in the narrative: religious fanaticism, Indian freedom movement, commerce, and class division in society. Their exposure to these issues allows fun, and also imposes on them the lessons in maturity.

The Scripture master, Mr. Ebenezar, a Christian, is a fanatic. He criticizes Hindu idolatry and superstition:

Why do you worship dirty, lifeless, wooden idols and stone images? Can they talk? No. Can they see? No. Can they bless you? No. Can they take you to heaven? No. Why? Because they have no life. What did your Gods do when Mahammed of Gazni smashed them to pieces, trod upon them, and constructed out of them steps for his lavatory? If those idols and images had life, why did they not parry Mahammed's onslaughts?

(SF 5)

Further, he praises Christianity by eulogizing Lord Jesus. Then he compares Krishna, a Hindu god, with Lord Jesus at the expense of the former:

Did our Jesus go gadding about with dancing girls like your Krishna? Did our Jesus go about stealing butter like that archscoundrel Krishna? Did our Jesus practise dark tricks on those around him?

(SF 5-6)

The very literalness and crudeness (and hence ridiculousness) of the adult Ebenezar's argument infuriates the Hindu student Swaminathan. The latter responds, in an equally literal and crude way, attacking Christianity and defending Hinduism:

If he [Lord Jesus] did not, why was he crucified? ... If he was a God, why did he eat flesh and fish and drink wine?

(SF 6)

Thus, humour operates at the expense of religious fanaticism in the adult world. Further, Swami, admitted to the Board High School, refers to Akbar Ali, who has made "a marvellous camera" (SF 108). He is a Muslim student, who "calls Mohammed of Gazni and Aurangzeb rascals" (SF 108). Only a scientific temper enables him to transcend sectarian prejudices. And Rajam also deflates a possible Hindu fanaticism while responding to Swaminathan:

'What makes you think that they were that?'

'Didn't they destroy our temples and torture the Hindus? Have you forgotten the Somnathpur god? ...'

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'We brahmins deserve that and more,' said Rajam. 'In our house my father does not care for New-Moon days and there are no Annual Ceremonies for the dead.'

(SF 109)

In a way, children's world here contests Christian, Muslim as well as Hindu fanaticism of the adult world.

The divide between the upper class and middle class in society shows in the way Swaminathan prepares himself to receive Rajam, "who has killed tigers, whose father is the Police Superintendent, and who is great" (SF 36). Swaminathan is worried about his granny, who is "too old" to be shown to Rajam, and also his own room in the house, which is hardly good enough for its display, and so he requests his father to allow him to use his room:

'Who is this Rajam, such a big man?'

'He is the Police Superintendent's son. He is--he is not ordinary.'

'I see. Oh! Yes, you can have my room, but be sure not to mess up the things on the table.'

(SF 38)

Swaminathan's father also consents to the son's sense of inferiority about his middle class. But the absurdity of Swaminathan's make-believe "room," a forced upward social mobility, is exposed later:

'Which is your room?' Rajam asked.

Swaminathan replied with a grave face: 'This is my room, why?'

Rajam took time to swallow this. 'Do you read such books?' he asked, eyeing the big gilt-edged law books on the table. Swaminathan was embarrassed.

Rajam made matters worse with another question.

'But where are your books?' There was just a flicker of a smile on his lips.

'The fact is,' said Swaminathan, 'this table belongs to my father. When I am out, he meets his clients in this room.'

'But where do you keep your books?'

Swaminathan made desperate attempts to change the topic: 'You have seen my grandmother, Rajam?'

(SF 38-39)

Historiography of Indian freedom movement, narrated from a child's viewpoint, offers another version of history. About two thousand citizens of Malgudi assemble on the right bank of Sarayu on 15th of August 1930 to protest against the arrest of Gauri Sankar, a prominent political worker of Bombay. The political speeches make Swami and Mani aware about "the plight of the Indian peasant," and they resolve "to boycott English goods, especially Lancashire and Manchester cloth, as the owners of those mills had cut off the thumbs of the weavers of Dacca muslin, for which India was famous at one time" (SF 94). With patriotic zeal Swaminathan flings his cap into the bonfire of foreign cloth. Next day the students go on strike to protest against Gauri Sankar's arrest despite the Head Master's request and threat. And another narrative of

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freedom struggle presents itself:

Swaminathan was an unobserved atom in the crowd. Another unobserved atom was busily piling up small stones before him, and flinging them with admirable aim at the panes in the front part of the school building. Swaminathan could hardly help following his example. He picked up a handful of stones and searched the building with his eyes. He was disappointed to find at least seventy per cent of the panes already attended to.

He uttered a sharp cry of joy as he discovered a whole ventilator, consisting of small square glasses, in the Head Master's room, intact! He sent a stone at it and waited with cocked-up ears for the splintering noise as the stone hit the glass, and the final shivering noise, a fraction of a second later, as the piece crashed on the floor. It was thrilling.

(SF 97-98)

It is precisely a narrative of history, contesting the grand narrative of Indian freedom struggle, of such "an unobserved atom" and his "thrilling" experiences. Further, at Board High School, Swaminathan rushes to the Infant Standards as he cannot tackle students "as big as himself" (SF 99). He finds one kid. He "pounced upon him, pulled out his cap, threw it down and stamped on it, swearing at him all the time," he "pushed him and dragged him this way and that and then gave him a blow on the head and left him to his fate" (SF 99). Thus, a local narrative of Indian freedom struggle registers children's pranks and mischiefs.

Another adult concern is money, or commerce, whose transactions inevitably address possible human limitations and safeguards against it. Rajam and his friends set up the Malgudi Cricket Club (M.C.C.) and write a letter after much homework to Messrs Binns in Madras to send them the required items for playing cricket. To their great joy and surprise, the captain of the team Rajam gets a letter from Messrs Binns, informing that they "would be much obliged to him if he would kindly remit 25% with the order and the balance could be paid against the V.P.P. of the Railway Receipt" (SF 118). Though they try a great deal to understand the message of the letter, they fail to understand the words "Obliged," "Remit," and "25%," concluding finally that they were sent "somebody's letter" (SF 119). The children's innocent simplicity fails to appreciate economic complexity, coextensive with complex human relationships.

In a way, the children's interaction with the adult world presents a necessary condition of growth in life. William Walsh notes in the context of a "Double Insight" in R. K. Narayan's fiction that for R. K. Narayan, "the very conditions of human growth are individual discrepancy and communal collaboration" (Walsh 381). Further, these adult concerns present the contradiction, typical of children's literature: fun as well as the need for maturity. But, the children's participation in this adult discourse also contests its religious fanaticism, historiography of a freedom struggle, class divisions in a society and economic conventions, precisely through their immature responses to them. R. Ramchandra observes about the characters in R. K. Narayan's fiction: "Narayan's fictional world is populated by people who exist at the outskirts of society; such threshold characters paradoxically validate life within society and it in turn, appears to cherish borderline values; the tragic coexists with the comic" (Ramachandra 24). Children, marginal to the adult social discourse, appear to be "threshold characters" in *Swami and Friends* in a large social context, and so precisely they contest the adult discourse.



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## Deconstructing Sukumar Ray: Non-Sense, or Strong Sense?

Adway Chowdhuri

Malini Bhattacharya

The most interesting thing that can be found in the writings of Sukumar Ray is that it becomes mandatory to read those writings twice: once in childhood, and again after getting educated and acquainted with the various contemporary Western philosophies. And it can stuff you with full pleasure in both the occasions. When Sukumar Ray was read for the first time in childhood, it was a sheer enjoyment due to the simple and pure whimsy touch of a fairy-tale. His creations were wild and wicked, dreamy and delirious. It was a paradigm of utter non-sense that can fill a child with immense enjoyment. But, after getting familiar with the contemporary theoretical notions, his writings could be placed under the microscope of a more matured critical scrutiny and found that they are replete with strong sense. If we go in retrospection, we shall find that his writings came to the world in the early 20th century—the era of Bengal Renaissance when a tremendous spurt in realm of Bengali literature, art and music took place—much before the emergence of contemporary theories like Structuralism, Poststructuralism, Postmodernism, and Postcolonialism etc. Yet his writings are dotted with simple and absurd questions and subjects that anticipate most of these philosophies. Through his writings Ray presents children's world full of chaotic disorder but pregnant with some basic thoughts that jettison the easy and smooth flow of the so-called conventional system of our life and society. This equivocal nature makes his writings so unique, so individual. There is no other writer of children's literature with the same intensity of provocation and a capacity to dismantle the adult's thought-patterns. Here his writings become equally thrilling to children and adults.

The keynote of Sukumar Ray's writings is that it immediately transports the readers, both the children and the adults, into a world of absurdity. This absurd world carries forth a uniquely pure enjoyment to the children readers; the filigreed work of imagination installs the young readers into a world of fairy-tale, of dream, of childish imagination. But for a mature reader, it is an anticipation of the theory of Absurd. In Absurdist theory, the Absurd emerges out of the elementary dissonance between the individual's quest for meaning and the obvious meaninglessness of the universe, out of the conflict between the human propensity to seek value and meaning in life and the human inability to find any. And to effectively demonstrate this absurd human condition, we need works of literature that are themselves absurd. However, from this perspective, Ray's literary works go in communion with this notion of Absurdism. In his *Glibberish-Gibberish*, Ray proposes:

"Come lawless creatures with wilful features  
Each unbound and clueless soul.  
Nonsensical ways topsy-turvy gaze  
Stay delirious all the time,  
Come you travellers to the world of babblers  
And the beat of impossible rhyme." [Chattariji 4]

These 'lawless creatures' and 'clueless souls' emblemize human beings in the Absurdist world of Sukumar Ray. However, the meaninglessness of the world and the contradiction between this unruly meaningless state and the so-called logical system are best exemplified in *Mish-Mash*:



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"A duck and a porcupine, no one knows how,  
(Contradictory to grammar) are a duckupine now." [Chattarji 5]

The birth of a 'duckupine' out of the synthesis of a duck and a porcupine is absurd, and beyond any logical explanation as 'no one knows' how it happened. Moreover, here 'grammar' signifies the prevailing logical system which acts in conformation to the power consensus of the institution. In contradiction to this customary system, such absurd and meaningless phenomenon occurs.

In the notion of the Absurdism, 'absurd' does not mean "logically impossible," but rather "humanly impossible." [Silentio 7] However, modern science of genetics permits selective breeding resulting in the birth of a new kind of species. Therefore, the birth of a 'duckupine' may not be 'logically impossible', but it is 'humanly impossible' as a duck and a porcupine belong to two completely different families of species and it is impossible to make them mingle with each other. In another poem called *Wise Old Woody* an old man does an extensive research on the nature of timber—he has "messed around so long with wooden sticks"—and takes boiled bit of woods as his food:

"Black pots and white beard, an old man sits  
Enjoying the sun, eating boiled wooden bits." [Chattarji 9]

In fact, eating boiled wooden bits is humanly impossible, but logically not impossible.

Probing Ray's writings further, there will be found an aura of Postmodernism which pervades all his writings. He underlines his writings with a single 'postmodernist' marker: to "subvert the foundations of our accepted modes of thought and experience". [Abrams 168-169] As Postmodernism defies the 'logocentric'-the authority of the world, the prospect of reaching a concluding meaning or of being in the presence of pure 'sense', everything is subject to conditional judgment. The most ordinary practices, habits and conventions may seem to be meaningless and whimsical to others. Ray conjures a world stuffed with strange people, places and animals and delegitimizes the strapping reality. In his poem *Very Strange*, the commonplace phenomena of our lives are narrated with sheer disbelief:

"Hey listen! You know the old doc who lives up on our street,  
Do you know he mashes his rice and uses his fingers to eat?  
Do you know he feels hungry when he hasn't eaten all day?  
And that when he feels sleepy he starts to yawn and sway?" [Chattarji 55]

Interestingly, the volume of suspicion is so high that the narrator wishes to visit the place by himself and corroborate such impossible occurrences with his own eyes:

"Is all this true or false, you think? Why don't we go and see?" [Chattarji 55]

Bombagarh in 'Bombagarher Raja' ['King of Bombagarh' (My translation)] bears the testimonials of this absurd and meaningless world where everything is viable (Das 32). The king walls up fried and solidified mango juices in a frame; the queen has a cushion fixed to her head; the queen's brother fixes nails on breads. These apparently meaningless phenomena in a ruler's court delegitimize the convention of the normal system of administration—the iconic form of an absolute authority—yet they may carry some underlined meaning: royal queens, in most cases, have nothing to do apart from taking rest; and the royal brother exerts nothing worthwhile. Ray's *Haw-Jaw-Baw-Raw-*



Adway Chowdhuri; Malini Bhattacharya

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*Law* [Chattarji 89-126] is a paramount example of distortion and reversal of the absolute system, as there a handkerchief turns into a cat, the animals go around talking to each other, and people turn their ages backwards after forty.

Examining the Postmodern concept of the relation between the real and its copy, it can be deduced that the term propounded by Jean Baudrillard in *Simulacres et Simulation* - 'simulation' or 'simulacrum' - is in dire contradiction with representation, the notion that justifies the traditional Western philosophic idea that there is a difference between the real and its copy. Representation is pillared upon the concept that there is an obvious distinction between the Saussurean hypothesis of the signifier and the signified, between a word or 'sound-image', and the idea or the 'mental concept'. However, taking the example of the word 'hamburger', simulation intersects the distinction between the word and what is being represented in reality by that specific word. Living in a tech-savvy world, we are flooded with images of anything real-on television, advertising hoardings, magazines, newspapers and so on-which are just a copy of the real. As a result, the real becomes impossible to think without the copy. In other words, the disturbing idea that the copy is not a copy of something real, but only a copy of another copy is instigated and developed by the concept of simulation. In the light of this, Ray in his *Picture Book* declares:

"I write exactly what I see, there is no trick in that  
 What the words say to me I put down in pictures pat." [Chattarji 79]

He draws pictures and illustrates with exact representation some events, actions and emotions that are written down in words:

"Poor Habu screamed with pain  
 Brought the house down on his head.  
 Broke his mother's heart he did  
 'Oh my poor dear boy', she said.  
 Aunty let loose a flood of tears  
 Nearly drowned out of her wits.  
 The boy-next-door witnessed it all  
 And was quite thrilled to bits." [Chattarji 81-82]

This exact illustration of the ideas with images usurps the traditional Western philosophic concept of representation, as there remains no distinction between the signifier and the signified, between a word or 'sound-image', and the idea or the 'mental concept' that it represents. This, in turn, anticipates the basics of Postmodern concept of 'simulation', as the theory of simulation defies the distinction between a word or 'sound-image', and the idea or the 'mental concept' and vindicates that a word is attached with an image that we see in television or other visual devices. Therefore, these images, drawn to illustrate the events or actions or emotions, are the first-hand copy of the real; that is, the events and actions or emotions. From now on whenever we shall come to experience those events or actions or emotions, we shall be reminded of these images instead of the real words.

In *Haw-Jaw-Baw-Raw-Law* there is an example of 'metafiction' when within the main story the Old Man unravels another story-the story of a princess and her ball of wool. However, a story should have a plot which normally consists of a proper beginning, a middle, and an end. But here the Old Man, while telling the story to the Narrator, challenges all of these notions and starts his story right in the middle of an action with the words 'By then':



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"By then the Chief Minister had swallowed the Princess's ball of wool. Nobody had the faintest idea that this had happened...."[Chattarji 99]

The story even ends abruptly just when it is meant to take a flight. This narrative technique, to some extent, corresponds to the Postmodern narrative technique which jettison the traditional narrative technique of a story.

Ray employs the literary genre called travelogue in his *The Diary of Cautious Chuckleonymous* [Chattarji 156-170] to describe an exploration of Professor Chuckleonymous in a queer forest in Karakoram region inhabited by grotesque and outlandish animals. One of those animals gobbles bread and boiled eggs, one remains complaining even after consuming jelly, and one makes terrible howling but does not bite anyone. In fact, *The Diary of Cautious Chuckleonymous* has a thematic affinity to *The Lost World* of Arthur Conan Doyle where the exploration was executed in the Amazon forest by Professor Challenger. Interestingly, *The Diary of Cautious Chuckleonymous* becomes a parody of *The Lost World* as the serious intonation found in the total environment and actions of *The Lost World* are diminished and turned into a comic whimsy in Ray's story. pocket wounded Laxman and escapes after Hanuman catches him in the act, Hanuman is qu

In his earlier play *Lakshmaner Shaktishel* [in the ancient Indian epic Ramayana by Valmiki, Laxman, the brother of Ram who is the hero of the epic, got hurt by a deadly weapon called 'shaktishel' hurled at him by Ravan, the villain. Here the title refers to that incident.] Ray exerts the device of demythification to exude the reversal of the established system of belief with a comical overtone [Das 157]. He demythifies the mythological characters of *Ramayana* by deforming them into utterly farcical figures. Here Jambuban scorns Bibhishan for having a stinking beard, Bibhishan is petrified to face Ravan, Ravan tries to pick ite reluctant to take the journey at night to collect the magical herb 'Bishalyakarani' to save Lakshman's life and ultimately he is bribed with a banana to do so, Hanuman again asks for reward after Lakshman gets his sense back. Here, more or less all the characters are presented as timid, lazy, careless and selfish-as simple and ordinary as common human beings. They are robbed of all the heroic valour attached to them in *Ramayana*. However, this distortion of mythical figures compartmentalises this play with Aristophanes' *The Frogs* where a slave Xanthias is depicted as smarter, stronger, more rational, more prudent, and braver than his master Dionysus the God. There Dionysus is presented as a petrified figure that is being teased by Xanthias with the claim to have seen the frightening monster Empusa. Later Dionysus gets whipped by Aeacus to know his real identity.

Sukumar Ray's narratives, as can be found, are marked with weird associations which instil the required comic sense attached with the absurd effect:

"Maasi go maasi pachchhe hasi  
Neem gaachete hochchhe seem  
Haatir maathaay byanger chhaata  
Kaager baasaay boger dim." [Das 36]  
["Ho aunt, ho aunt, I am all laughter  
The kidney beans on neems do grow  
Elephants guard their heads with mushrooms  
The stork lays egg in nest of crow"] (My translation)

This untitled poem exudes the keynote of Ray's narratology which juxtaposes meaningless ideas and comprehensible norms. However, this weird association

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between meaningless ideas and decipherable norms posits Ray's writings under the rubric of Magic Realism. Magic Realism reveals a world which at once de-familiarizes the readers to the extent that it instigates to presuppose something of the contour of the magical; something not completely comprehended but felt as palpable and significant.

"Aadim kaaler chnadim heem  
Torhay bnadha ghorhar dim  
Ghoniye elo ghumer ghor  
Gaaner paala saango mor." [Das 54]  
[Of olden days the silvery dew  
Horse's eggs in bundles few  
Sleepy trance makes my eyelids bend  
My turn of singing comes to end."] (My translation.)

This untitled poem contains fantastical elements which are intuitively 'logical'. Here in his death-bed Ray compares his literary works to 'toray bandha ghorhar dim' ['Horse's eggs in bundles few']; that is, complete nonsense, and prophecies his imminent death. Here Ray, it seems, voices his Existential pangs: his life has come to an end, but his existence equates to nothing apart from complete nonsense. However, Magic Realism is also a technique used to camouflage those realities which are so harsh that they seem rationally unacceptable. Hence, the help of unreal events or incidents or words are taken to euphemise them. In *One Hundred Years of Solitude* Gabriel García Márquez describes the death of Remedios the Beauty, Arcadio and Santa Sofía's first child, the most beautiful woman ever seen in Macondo, in a way which stems a magical environment covering the harsh reality: Remedios is described to ascend into the sky one afternoon in the 4pm sun, while folding Amaranta's white sheet. Here in the above poem, Ray articulates the cruel reality of his impending death in a comical way that diminishes the harshness.

Anticipating the doctrine of Magic Realism, Ray literally describes the process of distortion of time in *Haw-Jaw-Baw-RAW-Law* so that ultimately it becomes cyclical. When the narrator said to the Old Man that he is just eight years and three months old instead of thirty seven which the Old Man has predicted, the Old Man asked whether his age is "Increasing or decreasing"? [Chattarji 98] In fact, according to the Old Man, there people never gets as old as eighty years, because they reverse the clock after reaching the age of forty:

"As soon as we reach 40, we start reversing the clock. Instead of becoming 41, then 42, a person gets younger-39, 38, 37 and so on. In this way, when a person reaches 10, we start climbing up again. Look at me-I've lost track of the number of times my age has gone up, then down, then up again. Net-net, right now I'm thirteen years old." [Chattarji 99]

In fact, in the magical world depicted in *Haw-Jaw-Baw-RAW-Law* time has literal value. As time is flux, not constant, so the value of everything changes with the time. As a result, there is nothing called universal facts with regard to value. For example, seven into two is not always valued as fourteen; it changes with the time:

"The Raven said, 'When you said it, it wasn't yet fully fourteen. It was thirteen rupees, fourteen annas and three pice. If I hadn't been alert and swooped down and written 14 at just the right moment, it would have become fourteen rupees, one anna and nine pice by now.'

I said, 'I've never heard such a foolish thing. If seven twos are fourteen, it's fourteen



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at all times. Be it one hour ago or ten days later.'

The Raven looked taken aback. 'Do you mean to say in your country, time has no value?'

I said, 'What do you mean?'

The Raven said, 'If you stayed here for a few days, you'd understand. In our market right now, time is money...' [Chattarji 95]

In *Through the Looking Glass*, Lewis Carroll puts the phenomenon of Cause and Effect in inverse order and creates a world which is magically real with the effect of the complete negation of our established convention that cause always precedes effect: Hatter is imprisoned and punished before the trial—which is adjourned till the next Wednesday—begins to take place. In fact, there is no example of inversion of Cause and Effect following the mores of Magic Realism in Ray's writings, but Ray exerts the concept of distortion of Cause and Effect with a filigree work of imagination in *Wordygurdyboom!* where the soundless phenomena like the blooming of flowers, or the movement of fragrance cause tremendous sounds:

"Whack-thack boom-bam, oh what a rackers-  
Flowers blooming? I see! I thought they were crackers!  
Whoosh-swoosh ping-pong my ear clench with fear,  
You mean that's a pretty smell getting out of here?  
Hurry-scurry clunk-thunk-what's that dreadful sound?  
Can't you see the dew falling, mustn't move around!  
Hush-shush listen! Slip-slop-sper-lash  
Oh no, the moon's sunk-glub-glub-glub-ash!" [Chattarji 21]

Delving deep into Sukumar Ray's attitude towards knowledge—which has found voice in many of his writings—it will be found that it is tinted with Nietzschean view of knowledge. Friedrich Nietzsche theorises in his book *Will to Power* people first set their aim—what they want—and then put the facts accordingly. A particular piece of philosophy or scientific theory is recognized and accepted as 'true' only when it fits the paradigm of truth laid down by the gamut of contemporary intellectual or political authorities, by the members of the ruling elite, or by the prevailing doctrines of knowledge. Hence, it can be deduced that, all knowledge is an expression of the 'Will to Power'. Thus, there is no existence of absolute truth or objective knowledge; only an interpretation of truth or knowledge can be achieved. However, in Sukumar Ray, following this Nietzschean hypothesis, there is always a sarcastic attitude towards absolute knowledge. It always falls short of answering an absurd question. In *Gorgondola*, for example, the King asked all the pundits,

"A crow just appeared in my court, made a terrible sound and went away. Could you learned men tell me why?" [Chattarji 145]

In fact, there is no logically befitting answer to this question; and the apparently probable logical interpretations, which, in turn, stamp the incident as an absurd and meaningless one, cannot satisfy the King, the head of the ruling institution, whose mind is predetermined to reach for an illogically serious explanation. Hence, the King is satisfied by an absurd interpretation of that absurd incident at last:

"...when Gorgondola appears before a king, he puts on the appearance of a jungle crow. And that when he enters the court, he heads for a pillar to the right of the throne, sits on it with his head bent and his face towards the north, rolls his eyes and makes a sound that goes "Caw". [Chattarji 147-148]

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The epistemological crisis evolved out of the absence of absolute knowledge generates a sense of complete loss of identity which is anticipated by Ray in Haw-Jaw-Baw-Raw-Law:

"I asked him, 'Who are you? What's your name?'

He thought a bit and said, 'My name is Gobbledygook. My brother's name is Gobbledygook, my father's name is Gobbledygook, my uncle's name is Gobbledygook-

I interrupted, 'Instead of blathering on, why don't you simply say your entire clan is called Gobbledygook?'

This stumped him. Then he thought a bit and said, 'But that's not true, my maternal uncle's name is Inkblot, my father's younger brother's name is Inkblot, my mother's sister's husband's name is Inkblot, my father-in-law's name is Inkblot-'

I cut him short, 'Oh stop it! You're lying through your teeth.'

The creature sputtered and said, 'No, actually my father-in-law's name is Biscuit'." [Chattarji 108]

However, this anticipation of the identity crisis emerging out epistemological crisis puts Ray in the same bracket with James Joyce. In *Ulysses* Joyce erodes "the arbitrary semantic, political, and syntactical barriers that distinguish one thing from another." [Smith 206] Stephen Dedalus articulates,

"Sounds are impostors. [...] Like names, Cicero, Podmore, Napoleon, Mr. Goodbody, Jesus, Mr. Doyle, Shakespeares were as common as Murphies. What's in a name?" [Joyce 578]

Dissecting this observation made by Joyce, Eric D. Smith puts forth:

"If sounds (spoken language) and names (nomenclature, definition) are 'impostors', humankind is in a state of epistemological crisis. Meaning, predicated upon the ability to categorize things as separate and definable one from another, is rendered unattainable, and language is reduced to a hoax, a complex game the rules of which are indecipherable. Joyce, it seems, is anticipating the post-structuralist severance of the signifier and the signified." [206]

In the poem *The Billy Hawk Calf*, [Chattarji 36-38] Ray anticipates the pangs of being alienated, of being, as Michel Foucault theorises in his book *Madness and Civilization*, condemned to 'madness'. Alluding to Foucault's theory of madness, it can be inferred that the rules and procedures which act as the determining factors of installing the parameters of what they consider normal or rational successfully and effectively silence what they exclude from that selective circle. If an individual who is working within a particular discursive practice takes the risk of thinking or speaking without bowing to the unspoken 'archive' of rules and constraints, he will be condemned to madness or silence. That unspoken 'archive' of rules and constraints become social norms with time, and the risk of being condemned to madness becomes an overwhelming fear of being unacceptable in the mainstream society with a stamp of a social outcast. However, the way of depiction of this cruel fact in this poem bears the stamp of Ray's own unique sense of humour. He undermines these pangs and frustrations with the device of reversal of facts which generates absurdity and, therefore, tickles us to laughter: everyone desires to live a life replete with laughter, and generally the society or the system does not allow one to live in his own way of happiness if the mode of living



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does not conform to the norms endorsed by the society. Here, quite antithetically, the Billy Hawk Calf wants to live in grumble, to lead his life sans laughter:

The Billy Hawk Calf Is forbidden to laugh  
Crack a joke and he says,  
'No way, not by half!'. "[Chattarji 36]

In fact, this desire of living sans laughter may be the outcome of a nihilistic approach towards this meaningless and hopeless existence in this utterly meaningless and alien world. And, it seems, the whole world which is an enemy to the mankind conspires against him and causes him pain by laughing:

Those souls who willy-nilly Laugh themselves so silly  
Don't they see how each guffaw  
Hurts our poor old Billy? "[Chattarji 38]

It seems he is always in a fear to be laughed at, quite literally, for being a mismatch to the social norms:

"Always in a niggle-- Did someone just giggle?  
One eye open pitter-patter  
It tries to spot a jiggle." [Chattarji 36]

This mismatch between the aspirations of the Billy Hawk Calf and the larger social traditions, between the individual and the social norms, in addition, also alludes to the doctrine of Anomie which was propagated by David Émile Durkheim. Anomie is the outcome of a mismatch between individual or collective values and wider social values. It may also arise out of the dearth of a social ethic, which generates moral deregulation and an absence of valid aspirations:

"Durkheim used the concept to speak of the ways in which an individual's actions are matched, or integrated, with a system of social norms and practices ... Durkheim also formally posited anomie as a mismatch, not simply as the absence of norms. Thus, a society with too much rigidity and little individual discretion could also produce a kind of anomie, a mismatch between individual circumstances and larger social mores." [Web/ Aug. 1997]

Sukumar Ray, writing in the 19th Century colonial India, exploits the genre of nonsense with an obvious subversive Postcolonial aim: to criticise the colonial rule and its followers veneered under the pretext of a good-natured humour. In Ray, the vile of satire is very often directed to the gamut of the polished and educated gentlemen of the society who revere and vindicate the foreign education, cultures and practices with a complete negation of the indigenous cultures and traditions. This virulent attack against the academic and cultural colonisation and hegemony is exerted in poems like Making it Clear, [Chattarji 27-29] 'Ki Mushkil' [Das 38] ['What a Scrape' (My translation)], Note Book [Chattarji 42-44], Huffy-Puffy, [Chattarji 67-68] 'Jiboner Hishaab' [Das 129] ['Score of Life' (My translation)], 'Babu' [Das 64] ['Fopper' (My translation)]. There was a strong trend in vogue in colonised India to become a master in English education, and to become that efficient one needs to emulate the English. That trend is ridiculed in *Dashu the Dotty One*:

"Once, he suddenly appeared in school wearing trousers. They were as baggy and shapeless as pyjamas, and the coat that went with it looked like a huge pillowcase. He knew just as well as we did what an absurd sight he was, but for some reason, this



seemed to him a matter of great amusement. We asked him, 'Why the trousers?' and he laughed and said, 'Why, to improve my English.' [Chattarji 132]

Though Ray bears the mores of nonsense writings of Edward Lear and Lewis Carroll, he nativises that genre and inflicts the effect of social satire directed towards the oppressive British rule. In '*Ekushe Aayin*' [Das 33] ['Twenty One Rules' (My translation)], Ray sketches a claustrophobic land which is controlled by some absurd and oppressive rules: there fines are levied if moustache grows, the poets are imprisoned and tortured, sneezing at night and snoring at midnight invoke punishment. The whimsical system of administration, arbitrary method of justice, defective notions of discipline and punishment is the crux of the story *Gorgondola*: the King was dozing in the middle of a full court when a jungle crow flew in and said, 'Caw'. The King got up and said,

"Call the executioner."

The executioner arrived. The King said, 'Chop off his head.' [Chattarji 144]

However, without knowing the source of the commotion, the reason for it, or the other details, the King ordered execution for the thing that made such an awful noise!

The similar arbitrariness of justice is depicted in *Haw-Jaw-Baw-Raw-Law* where a trial, similar to one in Carroll's *Through the Looking Glass*, runs for a long time in a whimsical manner. The pictures of a sleepy owl as the judge, a crocodile as an advocate who sheds crocodile's tears, a cunning fox as another advocate, the bribed and purchased witnesses, ridiculous appeal for capital punishment to all the petitioners for the absence of a witness, coaxing an innocent to become the defendant, and ultimately the pronouncement of an absurd verdict against that innocent and false defendant, etc expose the extremely corrupted scenario of the system of judgment. The same arbitrariness of judgment can be found in Alexander Pope's *The Rape of the Lock* where in the afternoon, the judges feel hungry and pronounce their judgment against the accused persons in a jiffy. Similarly, the members of the jury feel a sickness for their home and become anxious to have their dinner. Therefore, they pronounce the verdict in a hurry convicting the accused and asking for the sentence of death:

"The hungry judges soon the sentence sign,

And wretches hang that jury-men dine;" [Pope 37, lines 21-22]

The mode of ruling by the establishment depicted in *Ekushe Aayin* ['Twenty One Rules' (My translation)] poems is very much analogous to, in the words of Louis Althusser, the ruling enacted by the 'Repressive State Apparatus' [136]. As Althusser accentuates, the Repressive State Apparatus (Heads of State, government, police, courts, army etc.), controlled by the ruling class which possesses 'State power' [Lcitch 1491-1492], acts to vindicate the ruling class by repressing the ruled class through aggressive and compelling system. Being under the British rule which inflicts mass protest dominant order, Indians were subjected to Repressive State Apparatus invoked by the State.

Interestingly, in *Lakshmaner Shaktishel*, the entire mankind is under the effect of satirical attack: Sugrib, who, according to Balmiki's *Ramayana*, belongs to the species of monkey, when compared to a human being by Bibhishan, objects furiously asking the reason for calling him 'a man' and warns Bibhishan for abusing him! This alludes to the Book IV: *A Voyage to the Country of the Houyhnhnms in Gulliver's Travels* where the writer, Jonathan Swift, portrays the Yahoos, who resemble human beings far too closely, and who are despicable and savage creatures, filthy and with distasteful practices, as



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inferior to calm, rational and intelligent horses, the Houyhnhnms.

Bengali language executes the principal role that endows a concrete silhouette to Ray's weird imagination. Ruskin Bond, while speaking about Sukumar Ray's literary works, commented,

The versatile Bengali language lends itself to rhyme and rhythm, to puns and word-play. [Chattarji, Introduction XII]

Ray's chiselled world-play stems from his command over this versatile language. Interestingly, Ray employs the linguistic device of code-mixing in *Heshoram Hushiyarer Diary* [*The Diary of Cautious Chuckleonymous*]: 'Gomratharium' [Das 448], a code-mixing between Bengali word 'Gomra' and Latin suffix 'tharium', ('Gomra' in Bengali means someone of ill-temper), a creature that sports a long miserable face and an awfully cross look; 'Chillanosaurus' [Das 450], a code-mixing between Bengali word 'Chillano' and Latin suffix 'saurus', ('Chillano' in Bengali means 'to shout'), a creature that makes a terrible howl. These examples of code-mixing like 'Gomratharium' and 'Chillanosaurus' simply underline Ray's mastery over the linguistic instruments as well as over the knowledge of foreign languages.

In Ray's *Haw-Jaw-Baw-Raw-Law*, one of the fundamental notions of Structuralism can be traced out. As an answer to one of the fundamental questions of linguistics- 'What is the relationship between words and things?' [47]-Ferdinand de Saussure illustrated in his book *Course in General Linguistics* (translated by Wade Baskin, 1915) the concept of 'Signifier' and 'Signified' on which the theory of Structuralism is constructed. In his view, words are 'signs' which comprise a 'signifier' or mark, and a 'signified' or concept. However, the relation between 'signifier' and 'signified' is arbitrary: it is not possible to reach a paradigmatic and stable signified. This arbitrariness of the relation between 'signifier' and 'signified' is literally illustrated by Ray in *Haw-Jaw-Baw-Raw-Law* when Smoothie's argument against the objection of the narrator for using the word 'funtomime' obliquely indicated to this hypothesis:

The bat said to the porcupine,  
Tonight you'll see a funtomime.

I said, 'Funtomime's not a word!

Smoothie said, 'Says who? If porcupine, elephantine and columbine are all words, then why not funtomime?' [Chattarji 113]

In fact, the connection between words and things does not bestow any meaning to the elements of language; rather those elements become meaningful being parts of a system of relations. The word 'funtomime', which is just an element of language, does not have any meaning in our accepted system of relations, but it may have some meaning in another unknown system of relations.

Thus, dovetailing the various perspectives in the writings of Sukumar Ray, it can be concluded that it becomes, in a postmodern jargon, praxis of pastiche which juxtaposes the ludicrous and serious, nonsense and strong sense. By deconstructing his delirium, the depth of his serious thoughts can be reached. In fact, what are most flabbergasting are the inquisitive mind and the imaginative eyes that belong to him. Though most of the doctrines that have been attached to his writings here were not propagated at his time, he anticipated them with his probing mind and inventive eyes. Here he becomes a prophetic figure-the only prophetic figure in the world who can entertain the child and the adult with equal flair.

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## The Use of the Christian Allegory in C.S. Lewis'

### *The Chronicles of Narnia : The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*

D Ebina Cordelia

Children's literature is a literary genre that appeals to children. Most broadly, the term applies to books that are actually selected and read by children. *The New Standard Encyclopedia* explains, "Children's literature is simpler in structure and more limited in vocabulary and is concerned with subjects of special interest to children"(313).

Though certain books are intended for children, they are also read and enjoyed by adults. Moral values and cultural beliefs have to be internalized in a child in a unique way. The best way is through children's literature. Books for children are useful in shaping the moral and cultural values of children. In addition to it, they also enrich children's imagination, their vocabulary, experience and understanding. For these reasons, children's literature can be considered as a boon.

Children's literature (either they are only for children or extended to adults) give pleasure to the readers by taking them away for a little time from their monotonous life. They influence the readers' mind wholly, make them fit and learn all that is essential for performing and developing their duties in their lives.

In the pages of history, one can find that children's literature begins with the Oral literature which included myths, legends and fairy tales. It was meant for children as well as for adults. It was didactic in nature in the mid fifteenth century.

Books of verse and prose for children were popular in the nineteenth century. One among them is Ann and Jane Taylor's works which include *Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star*. The middle years of this century is considered as the Golden Age of Children's Literature. It is because in this age there was an increase in the number and variety of books and magazines and also there was a kind of improvement in the quality of writing. Hence Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865), Mark Twain's *Tom Sawyer* (1876), and Carlo Collodi's *Pinocchio* (1882) are the world's best-loved children's books.

The post-war years were a period of uncertainty, in which old and unquestionable values came under scrutiny. During this period, there was a decline in Christian worship, in Britain. Thus, there was a nostalgia for ancient clarities which was reflected in the fictions belonging to this period.

In the most celebrated fantasies of the period, the contrast of the Light and the Dark was personified in works like Susan Cooper's sequence, *The Dark is Rising*, Alan Garner's *The Weirdstone of Brisingamen* (1960) and most importantly in C.S.Lewis' *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* (1950). Something of the period's nostalgia for a lost world of safe absolutes, mingled with the desire for clear and inspiring codes of conduct, is conveyed more explicitly than usual in C.S.Lewis' fictions.

Clive Staples Lewis (1898-1963) was known for his intellectual and imaginative expositions of Christian doctrine and for his scholarly literary essays. Lewis was a prolific writer. His books range in genre from fairy tales to science fantasy to Christian apologetics and have touched lives in almost every aspect of the Christian walk. Lewis' book *The Chronicles of Narnia* is a series of seven fantasy novels for children and is

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considered as a classic of children's literature. Written during 1949-1954, it is Lewis' most popular work having sold over several million copies in forty-one languages. It has been adapted several times, complete or in part for radio, television, stage and cinema.

*The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* (1950) tells the story of four Pevensie children: Peter, Susan, Edmund and Lucy. They discover a wardrobe in Professor Digory Kirke's house that leads to the magical land of Narnia, which is currently under the spell of the evil White Witch. The four children fulfill an ancient, mysterious prophecy while in Narnia. The Pevensie children help Aslan (the Turkish word for Lion) and his army to save Narnia from the evil White Witch, who has reigned over the kingdom of Narnia in winter for 100 years.

During World War II, many children were evacuated from London because of air raids. Some of these children including one named Lucy, stayed with Lewis at his home in Oxford, just as Pevensies stayed with the Professor. To express his love for Lucy Barfield, Lewis has dedicated *The Chronicles of Narnia* to Lucy. In the first book of the series, Lewis calls himself as Lucy's "affectionate Godfather."

Lewis has obviously immersed himself in Norse, Greek and then in Irish mythology and literature from boyhood. His studies with Kirkepatrick (the old tutor of Lewis' father) instilled in him a love of Greek literature and mythology and sharpened his skills in debate and clear reasoning.

All these influences and experiences which are a part and parcel of Lewis have played a great role in the success of *The Chronicles of Narnia*. The books are treasured, for they are not only an addition to the library of children's literature but also to the realm of Christian myth and symbolism.

The use of Christian allegory in the book, *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* has made Lewis succeed in his attempts to bring a change in the attitude of an individual towards other human beings, religion and nature. And this study concentrates on the use of Christian allegory in *The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*.

The entrance to C.S. Lewis' World of Narnia is an unexpected door to wonderland through which a person can pass if they can only learn to look beyond the mundane and real. With immense knowledge and experience, Lewis has woven the Biblical allegory together with modern myth, in this novel, inviting all to delight in the land of magic and fantasy.

*The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* is a book full of the medieval imagery of kings, queens and themes of good vs. evil. Combined with the medieval images are the fairy tale elements of talking beasts, witches, fauns, giants and dwarfs. All are written in Christian symbolism and allegory: perfect devices for gaining reader's attention and opening a window to Biblical teachings. This kind of a story is chosen because C.S. Lewis believed: "a children's story is the best art-form for something you have to say" (*On Stories* 32).

So, Lewis took a fairy-tale image (a faun carrying an umbrella). Children's narrative, in the form of the fairy-tale, is simple and straightforward. Lewis liked the fairy tale form. He says:



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And the moment I (Lewis) thought of that (the fairy tale) I fell in love with the Form itself: its brevity, its severe restraints on description, its flexible traditionalism, its inflexible hostility to all analysis, digression, reflections, and 'gas'... Its very limitations of vocabulary became an attraction (*On Stories* 46-47).

And thus Lewis began a delightful children's story that ended up as Christian allegory. "An allegory is a work which has a meaning behind the surface meaning" (Peck and Coyle 133).

Lewis has indeed written a narrative that *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* is good story telling on a primary level and also where a correlated order of agents, concepts and events is viable on a secondary level. It is an allegory of Christian ideas which has a plot incorporating the Doctrines of Theology through literal characters representing abstract concepts like the good, evil and the divine.

Lewis had a passion for Christian beliefs and that is expressed in his Narnian world. According to Christianity, the Son of God has become a Man in our world and in Lewis' imagination the Son of God has become a Lion in the Narnian world.

As God's people had been awaiting a redeemer for many years (in the *Old Testament*), the Narnians were also waiting for Aslan (which means Lion in Turkish). There were numerous prophecies about what would happen before the Messiah's coming and what would happen during his lifetime. The animals (in Narnia) similarly have prophecies about the coming of Aslan. They believed that Narnia would be delivered from its hundred years long winter when Aslan returns. The time for the fulfillment of the prophecies arrives with the arrival of 'the Sons of Adam and the Daughters of Eve' in Narnia (Peter, Susan, Edmund and Lucy).

One can find indirect hints to Biblical phraseology in *The Lion. The Gospel of John* (1.1-2) reads:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God.

Although *The Lion* does not present Aslan as creator, Lewis does refer to him as "the Son of the great Emperor-Beyond-the-Sea..." Aslan is a lion, "the Lion, the great Lion" (*The Lion* 89). John 1.1-2 praises the ancient ancestry of its subject, Jesus, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Son of God, the Father, and Lewis offers his comparisons with Aslan "the great Lion" son of the Emperor-Beyond-the-Sea.

John 1.4-5 praises Christ's life-giving quality and relates just as well to Aslan who gave life to Edmund and brought spring to Narnia. Neither Satan in our world nor the White Witch in Narnia could overcome the light that Jesus and Aslan brought to their respective worlds:

In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.

John's gospel is known primarily for its symbols of light and darkness and in this passage the author sets light and darkness in conflict. Lewis also sets light and darkness in conflict by comparing the warm golden colours of Aslan to the bloodless White Witch, and the barren snow-covered Narnian world, which is melted gradually and replaced with vegetation as Aslan approaches the land.

Direct parallels can be found in the body of John. An obvious parallel is Jesus'

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feeding the multitude with five barley loaves and two small fish (John 6.1-14). Lewis alludes to the story when Aslan feeds the army after winning the battle with the Witch, "How Aslan provided food for them all I don't know; but somehow or other they found themselves all sitting down on the grass to a fine high tea at about eight o'clock" (*The Lion* 194). Another obvious comparison is found in Jesus' statement in John 10.16 that "He has other sheep that must also hear His voice." Lewis' version finds Aslan having "other countries to attend to" (*The Lion* 197).

Lewis is able to make the reader revere and love Aslan. Aslan reflects God's Old Testament character - His justice, strength and wrath. All the Narnian animals love Aslan yet they tremble when he comes around. When three of the children, Peter, Susan and Lucy, first meet Aslan they react the same way. "For when they tried to look at Aslan's face they just caught a glimpse of the golden mane and the great, royal, solemn, overwhelming eyes and then they found they couldn't look at him and went all trembly" (*The Lion* 137-139).

The main display of the love of Aslan is seen when Aslan takes Edmund's place to be killed by the White Witch. This is a parallel to Christ's greatest act of love, taking the place of sinners on the cross.

In accordance with the Christian belief that Jesus died to take on Himself the suffering of mankind, Aslan negotiates with the White Witch to take the place of Edmund who had wrongly given himself to her. One night as Aslan thinks about what he has to do in order to save Edmund, he expresses the same burden as Jesus does when He prays in the garden of Gethsemane. Later Aslan, followed by Susan and Lucy, walks slowly and dejectedly to the great Stone Table. After asking the girls to stay hidden, Aslan gives himself over to the White Witch's forces.

John 18 is the beginning point for the crucifixion scenes found in the gospel. The scenes in both books (*the Gospel of John* and *The Lion*) begin at night. When the Roman battalion with "lanterns and torches and weapons", initially approaches Jesus, they draw back and fall to the ground (John 18.3-6). When Aslan approaches the Stone Table, monstrous looking creatures such as Ogres, Hags and Horrors stand around carrying "torches which burned with evil-looking red flames and black smoke" (*The Lion* 163). At the first sight of Aslan, "A howl and a gibber of dismay went up from the creatures" and "for a moment the Witch herself seemed to be struck with fear" (*The Lion* 163). The captors in both the books quickly recover and bind their prey (John 18.12 and *The Lion* 163).

The two stories (*the Gospel* story and *The Lion*) can be minutely paralleled in the death scenes. As Susan and Lucy watch, Aslan is shaved and mocked much like Jesus was before His crucifixion. Finally, Aslan is killed on the table, symbolic of the cross.

The resurrection scenes are just as close. Both scenes (in *the Gospel* and in *The Lion*) occur at sunrise. When Susan and Lucy wake up the next morning they go for a walk. They suddenly hear a loud crack and they go to the tomb. Jesus' first resurrected appearance is to Mary as she is weeping by the tomb (John 20.11-17) and Aslan's first appearance is to Susan and Lucy. Another gospel (*Matthew* 28.1) where there are two Marys found at the tomb could be mentioned.

Later, Jesus breathes on the disciples saying, "Receive the Holy Spirit" (John 20.22) and Aslan breathes on the animals, the Witch turned into stone and they all come to life (*The Lion* 180-181). As Christ defeated the devil, following his resurrection, Aslan



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destroys the White Witch for good in a final battle. Thus, Aslan and the good army conquer the White Witch and set the Pevensie children up to rule on the four thrones of Cair Paravel (the capital of Narnia) until Aslan comes again. Jesus set up His Kingdom of Priests on earth (*Rev* 5.10), His children (*Matthew* 18.3), and promises His people that He will come again (*Act* 1.9-11; *John* 21.23).

Thus, one can see Jesus through the form of Aslan, in correlating the fairy tale (*The Lion*) with the profound truths of the gospel. In contradiction to Aslan's goodness is the evil White Witch. The Witch is evil to the core, without even a hint of goodness within her. The Witch is actually part giant and part Jinn as Mr. Beaver says, "there isn't a drop of real human blood in the Witch" (*The Lion* 90-91). Lewis describes the bloodless White Witch as: "Her face was white - not merely pale, but white like snow or paper or icing-sugar; it was a beautiful face in other respects, but proud and cold and stern" (*The Lion* 37).

The Witch claims the throne of Narnia by brute force. She claims for power just as Lucifer. She calls herself as "the Queen of Narnia and Emperor of the Lone Islands" (*The Lion* 151). She enchants the land so it is always winter and never Christmas and so that the poor Narnians have no hope. She sways many Narnians to her side out of fear or lust for power, so that the Narnians are divided and are completely terrified. The Witch carries a golden wand that she uses to turn living things into stone. The Witch is hated and feared throughout the land, but no one except Aslan has the power to stop her.

In the novel, the Witch plays the role of the "Emperor's hangman" (*The Lion* 153) and she has the right to kill any Narnian caught in an act of treachery. The Witch's role is parallel to the role of Satan, to whom the souls of damned sinners are forfeited.

Edmund, one of the children who stumble into the world of Narnia through a wardrobe, runs into the White Witch on his first visit to the magical land. She feeds him Turkish Delight, a magic candy that makes him want more, the more he eats. As Edmund eats the enchanting food he becomes more and more consumed with trying to eat as much as possible. He epitomizes *Philippians* 3.19: "Their destiny is destruction, their God is their stomach, and their mind is on earthly things".

As Edmund becomes obsessed with 'earthly things', such as the Turkish Delight, he begins to make more compromises in order to please himself. The Bible warns against living to please the flesh. As Edmund is sucked under the Witch's power, she tempts him again. In addition to tempting Edmund with food, the White Witch offers him power.

Like Satan, the Witch is promising power in exchange for service. In *Matthew* 4.8-9, Satan offers Jesus "all the kingdoms of the world and their splendour". The Witch tells Edmund if he brings his siblings to her he will reign over Narnia and have all the Turkish Delight he wants. And Edmund gives in to the evil temptation and begins lying to and betraying his siblings. But later, the arrival of Aslan changes Edmund. He decides to become prince through obeying Aslan.

Finally when the Witch holds him as prisoner Edmund realizes he has been sinful and deceived. Just before the Witch is going to kill Edmund, Aslan comes and rescues him as Jesus redeemed the world from sin.

The Witch thinks she will rule the world if she can kill Aslan and Satan worked all his wiles to put Jesus to death thinking the world would be his once the Son of God was dead. Neither knows the complete power of God. The Deeper Magic, as Aslan



D Ebina Cordelia called it, from before the Dawn of Time, is unknown to the White Witch. The Deeper Magic says that when a willing victim gives its life for another, the spell will be broken. Aslan, in a parallel with Jesus, has the power within himself to be resurrected.

Aslan's perspective and foresight contrasts the Witch's myopia. Although the Witch can use magic to gain power, she does not have the vision or the character of Aslan. The Witch, who is merciless, cruel, power-hungry and sadistic, can be considered as an allegorical representation of the Prince of Darkness.

This novel specifically focuses on gluttony. Edmund's descent into the Witch's service begins during his frantic consumption of the magic Turkish Delight. The Witch's enchanted box of Turkish Delight initially seduces Edmund. The magical candy causes an insatiable greed for more in the unfortunate eater.

Edmund's consumption of the Turkish Delight may also be a reference to the sin of Adam and Eve, when they ate from the Tree of Knowledge. Edmund's gluttony for the Turkish Delight alludes to Adam and Eve's desire to eat the apple. Just as Eve believed in the cunning words of the serpent that tempted her to eat from the Tree of Knowledge, Edmund falsely believed the White Witch.

The character of Peter and the references to the Stone Table, the seasons, and the gifts that are given to the Pevensies in *The Lion* are also symbolical. Peter is a strong leader who becomes the High King of Narnia. Most closely, he would represent the Apostle Peter, who in reality is the first Leader of the Christian church after Christ ascended.

The Stone Table refers to the stone tablets that Moses brought down from Mount Sinai. These tablets contain the Ten Commandments and they represent an older, stricter form of religion. In the days when the Ten Commandments were brought down from the mountain, infractions against God would be punishable by death - retribution was swift, harsh, and irrevocable. When Aslan rises from the dead, the Stone Table is shattered, signifying the end of an older, crueler time and the advent of a newer, kinder era. Aslan has defeated death by rising from the dead, signaling the end of harsh customs and death as an acceptable punishment.

The Witch imposes an enchanted, eternal winter on Narnia, symbolizing a dead, stagnant time. Nothing grows, animals hibernate and people crouch around fires rather than enjoying the outdoors. The Witch's winter destroys the beauty and the life in Narnia. The season of winter represents that Narnia has fallen under an evil regime. The Witch's snow hides all traces of Aslan.

The winter of God's people was the time between the first sin in the garden when communication with God was broken and when Jesus came, according to the *Old Testament*. In a much more wondrous manner, spring occurs when Aslan arrives in Narnia. Of course, Christmas occurs before spring can come, because Christmas is the birth of Christ. It is Christmas that signals hope for mankind; with the birth of Christ, we are given the hope of new life. Spring follows Christmas and all of a sudden the woods are completely alive - "flowers are blooming, springs and brooks are chuckling, birds are singing and delightful smells waft past on gentle breezes" (*The Lion* 130-131). This is no ordinary spring, just as the Witch's winter was no ordinary winter. The spring is just as enchanted as the winter. And thus, Narnia is able to experience the epitome of life rather than death.



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Father Christmas represents Saint Nicholas, the Spirit of Giving. Father Christmas gives Peter, a shield and a sword; to Susan, a bow and a quiver full of arrows and a little ivory horn; to Lucy, a little bottle which contains the juice of the fire-flowers and a few drops of it have the power to heal the wounds (*The Lion* 118-119).

Ephesians 6 talks about the Spirit and the weapons. It reads:

Above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. (*Ephesians* 6.16)

And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; (*Ephesians* 6.17)

Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being always watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints - (*Ephesians* 6.18)

Thus, one can parallel 'helmet' with 'salvation', 'shield' with 'the spirit within us' and Susan's 'horn' with 'prayer'.

Hence, the allegorical references to Christian theology are revealed through major characters like Aslan, the White Witch and Edmund in *The Lion*. And the events in the story like the temptations of the White Witch, Edmund's fall, Aslan's sacrifice to redeem Edmund and the Narnians owe their allusions to the temptation, sin of gluttony, the power of Satan, humankind's redemption and salvation that are revealed in the Bible.

Through the magical story of *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* Lewis is able to illustrate the aspects of his Christian beliefs that appeal to audiences throughout the world. They are taught about God without being told directly about God himself.

The main aim of children's literature is to give value-based books which will provide both entertainment and education for children. Along with the elements of fantasy, the stories in children's books have made attempts to give simple moral lessons/ various principles of life in the best way, so that they can deal with the realities of life. But down the ages, most of the books for children have been either purely didactic or purely entertaining. A good combination of both in a children's book was rarely seen.

The book acts as a mirror to Lewis' interest in mythologies, his world of Boxen and most importantly his deep faith in Christian teachings. The story of *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* in the imaginary land of Narnia is built on the foundation of the Bible and it has been raised in the form of allegory, so that one can view the invisible struggle of good and evil which is inside everyone that eventually determines human life. The invisible/ immaterial passions are made visible through the effective use of allegory.

Lewis, then, has retold the story of the death and resurrection of Jesus in the context of Aslan and Narnia. He has used several devices, however, to transform this heavy content into material for a children's novel. The obvious difference in Lewis' retelling of the Biblical story is his use of Aslan the lion and the land of Narnia. There is, to an extent, use of lion imagery in the Bible: "You are a lion's cub, O Judah; you return from the prey, my son." (*Gen* 49:9), "A king's wrath is like the roar of a lion..." (*Proverbs* 20:2), "They will follow the Lord; he will roar like a lion." (*Hosea* 11:10). Most important is the reference of lions in the Book of Revelation, referring (we assume) to Christ: "See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed." (*Rev* 5:5). Evidently, Lewis' choice of a lion to represent Christ is not completely original; there are, however,



other reasons for Lewis to choose this animal to represent Jesus. For instance, perhaps he assumed that children might better sympathize with the death of an animal than the death of a historical figure. Lewis uses a similar technique in using "Deep Magic" to explain the miraculous events that take place, like the resurrection: "It is more magic.' They looked round. There, shining in the sunrise, larger than they had seen him before, shaking his mane (for it had apparently grown again), stood Aslan himself." (Lewis, 1986, p.147) The young audience for whom the *Narnia Chronicles* were mainly intended would have an easier time understanding the concept of magic, rather than the theological implications that arise in the Bible stories of the resurrection. Finally, Lewis uses children as the main characters of the *Narnia Chronicles*. Immediately this establishes a connection for young readers that the Bible rarely offers. Children are also more likely to relate to a Messiah figure that constantly treats children with respect and love; a figure like Aslan.

As a Christ-figure, Aslan is portrayed with great power, strength, love and wrath. With all the evil qualities, the Witch is portrayed as Satan/Lucifer. Most widely, the story of Apostle Peter, the two Marys, crucifixion, resurrection, the sin of gluttony, salvation, redemption and many other Biblical themes echo through the characters, events and actions in *The Lion*.

In the book, *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* the Christian ideals like Love, Hope, Truth and Innocence are manifested in certain actions, events and characters. The deep Christian allusions teach Biblical stories and truths in a new, distinct way to the older readers. Thus, Lewis has made an attempt to change the attitude of an individual towards the Doctrines of Theology (labeled as "watchful dragons" [On Stories 52]) by simplifying the story of salvation.

The ultimate purpose of the Bible is to educate the human mind and soul and to help in the growth of every individual. Similar is the case with Lewis' *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* but his chief target is the moral growth of children. The path to wisdom is made easy when the journey of education begins from childhood innocence and trust. Perhaps this is the reason for children being the protagonists in this novel.

The impressive elements in the story, *The Lion*, which fascinate children, are adventure and magic. One benefit in fantasy novels is impossible things can be made possible. Hence, in Lewis' fantasy land, the animals like the lion, wolves, dog-fox, beavers and many others are humanized; winter is extended for hundred years; mythological characters like the Faun, Nymphs, Dryads, Naiads, the Witch, Dwarfs, Satyrs, Centaurs, Unicorns, Giants are made the inhabitants of the Narnian world. The Witch can turn Narnians into stones using her magic wand. Aslan can die and rise and can breathe life to the people who were turned as stones. Susan's arrow will never miss the aim. One drop from Lucy's Bottle will cure the wounds of the sufferings. Though the children have spent many years in Narnia, no time is spent in their real world. They come back on the "same day and the same hour of the day on which they had all gone into the wardrobe to hide" (*The Lion* 202). These incredible elements contribute in making the story entertaining and magical.

Lewis has tried to transport children from the monotonous teachings of schools and churches to a new fantastic world which consists of talking animals and fun characters simultaneously exposing the concepts of Christianity indirectly. The quality of words, the narrative style and the imagination utilised kindles the imagination of the reader, to view the story as a child.



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In attracting the young as well as the old, *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* can be paralleled with *Aesop's Fables* and *Panchatantra* stories, which are good entertaining and educating stories. A fable fascinates and excites the reader. It occupies a prominent place in the world of literature. As soon as it is narrated, the reader enters into an exciting and thrilling world where only improbable things happen. Similarly, *Panchatantra* stories excite the reader with their use of anthropomorphosized animals. Dramatic visualisation is common between these two works. They teach the basic human values like - how doing good to others lead to merit and giving trouble to others, to sin; a man should not act upon what he has imperfectly seen or known or heard. All these characteristics and morals are also found in this novel.

In the wonderful fairy tale of, *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* a number of dualities are presented such as good and evil, appearance and reality, youth and age, love and hatred, growth and decay, spring and winter, the natural and the supernatural, ingratitude and loyalty, revenge and forgiveness, death and rebirth. By means of this dualistic approach the complex nature of reality with all its ambivalences are brought out by Lewis.

Realism and Romanticism are combined in this novel to capture the imagination and soul of the reader. By proposing the most important Christian teachings, the fantasy book enlightens the spirit of the reader. This *Chronicle* which believes in the right and wrong educates and brings grace into the heart of the young.

The Book of God is given to mankind as armour to fight against evil and pursue good. In the difficult journey of mankind the Book of God acts as a guide to achieve union with the Ultimate Reality. It entreats us to adopt life's deepest values like Love, Hope, Truth and Innocence. Each New Year and every generation has seen *the Bible* as "a living drama" (Chetwynd 43). Influenced by this "living drama", Lewis began his allegorical journey, thus retelling an old story relevant to the youth today.

Thus, Lewis has succeeded in his attempt to give a valuable magical story by interweaving the story of *the Bible* and a fairy-tale in the best possible manner. One reading of Lewis' *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* gives hope to every human heart by reinstating Browning's faith:

God's in his heaven...

All's right with the world! (Pippa's Song 7,8)

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# Fairy-tales and Fantasy as the Upholder of Values in Children's Literature: A Visit to *The Winged Horse: Fairy-tales from Bengal*

Saurabh Kumar Singh

## I

Children's literature has always been associated with the elements of fairies and fantasies. These fairies and fantasies contain in themselves the seeds of basic values, principles, and certain positive associative factors which in turn help a lot in the pruning and nurturing of children, and at the same time offering young readers ways to negotiate their place in the world. Human society, since its origin, has been a cradle of problems, worries, and tensions. Human mind amidst all these problems, worries and tensions tries to transform these harsh and crude realities of life into beautiful things with the help of imagination i.e. fairy tales and fantasies. These fairy tales and fantasies have been mediating us from the very beginning as the means through which we can discuss not only human conflicts, but basic cultural ideologies pertaining to growing up, maturation and most important a sense of self also.

In connection to realism, fairy tales and fantasy in children's literature in general, have been considered serious. This aspect has well been highlighted by contemporary scholarship. It has recognized that the genre of realism has no exclusive authority over claims to truth. Now it can safely be affirmed that fairy tales and fantasy have shifted radically from their previously undervalued position as somehow less significant than other genres of literature which employ realism (Stephens, *Language and Ideology in Children's Fiction* 241-42 and Hunt & Lenz, *Alternative Worlds in Fantasy Fiction* 2), to negotiate questions related to values, morals and principles that are at the foundation of cultural tensions and anxieties. In this connection Reynolds rightly observes that fantasy is considered "one of the most important genres" in its ability and capacity to allow authors and readers both deep engagements with "disturbing material" (*Modern Children's Literature* 42-43).

## II

Kamal Sheoran has rightly commented that "India is country of many contradictions. Contemporary children's literature is one of them" ("Contemporary Children's Literature in India" 127). To be very precise India is the second most populated country of the whole universe. India has millions of children and unfortunately thousands of them are doomed to be in the clutch of demon illiteracy. India does not have enough schools for its children. Teachers! With due course of so called growth of industry and cities, the very basic structure of India as a nation has crumbled down. Perhaps this bitter truth is known to every sensitive person so I need not to talk about this. What I need to talk is to facilitate our children with certain basic textbooks and other basic needs which can fulfill their rudimentary need of education. At this crucial point, to speak of children's literature as a specialized field is far-fetched and fanciful. This sad aspect is well conjoined by the fact that India has the greatest living oral narrative tradition in the world. This narrative tradition in the form of myths, folks, fairy tales, legends, and histories fulfills and feeds the needs of every young and growing child in that he gets his complete "story" quota orally in the form of story passed down through the generations where the children would flock to their grandmothers in the evening

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to receive wondrous fairy tales and fantasies brought alive through gesture and mimicry. And in this context children's literature in India remains perhaps the greatest paradox of all.

Indian treasure of fairy tales, folklore, and fantasy is rich and imaginative and remains the most interesting source for children's literature. Chief among them are the *Panchatantra* (Five Principles), written in Sanskrit in 200 B.C., the *Hitopadesh*, the *Brihatkatha*, Kshemendra's *Brihatkatha Manjari*, Somadeva's *Kathasarit-Sagra*, the *Jatakas*, the *Puranas*, the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* epics, as well as a large number of ancient Indian Sanskrit classics. Like the Norwegian collection of folklore, the *Norske Folkeeventyr*, Indian mythology is not specifically for children but it is most popular with children. The *Panchatantra*, an ancient Indian collection of animal fables in verse and prose both, is the most important book of Indian fables. It has greatly influenced the folktales not only of east but of the west also. It is the main source of Indian folktale literature. The original Sanskrit work is attributed to Vishnu Sharma. However, it is based on older oral traditions, including animal fables that are as old as we are able to imagine. Animal fables from this source are predominant and remain as always society's traditional vehicle of social and moral instruction. Tales of animal wisdom, cunning, and foolishness, in which conventional animal characteristics are ignored, are peculiar to India. Thus it is not at all surprising to find a clever quail, a smart jackal, an intelligent crow, or a stupid tiger; though the owl is regarded as an ill omen, but not the raven; the peacock, far from being vain, is said to weep because he has such ugly feet, and the snake is not considered dangerous and vile but a protector of the innocent. These fables are retold in many languages not only within India but throughout the universe.

Indian folklore and fairy tales, much of which has yet to be printed, remain a curious mixture of tradition and pure fantasy. In these we find plethora of stories populated with ghosts, ogres, restless spirits, and other such representatives of the underworld as, angels, demons, *Yama* the God of Death, and holy sages, *rishis*, and *munis* who are gifted with supernatural powers to curse a whole kingdom to ashes or bring alive the dead with a mantra. These exploitations of supernatural and fantasy are not merely to pass the time but must be understood in terms of the chronicles of timeless concepts that assume authentic dimensions not only with children but also with adults to this day. Fantasy, as represented in myths, legends, folk/fairy tales, and epic forms, is stimulating and unusual enough to keep even the 21st century child wonderstruck for hours. Story concepts are imaginative and are best put across to a receptive audience in oral narrative, which provides full vent to the storyteller's interpretations, according to the mood and expectations of the audience. Fear and excitement go simultaneously. This phenomenon is quite opposed to the prevalent modern storytelling tendencies which shun situations that create unwanted tensions tend to be jejune because they not only lack the natural pace of the folklore but also fail to keep up with the imagination of the child, for whom nothing is impossible, nothing implausible, and nothing so strange that it cannot be enjoyed. This is particularly noticeable in the children's story hour programs on All India Radio which broadcast songs, ballads, and riddles for children. Although oral narrative is still a tradition in every home in India, story forms are changing. The old grandmother, wizened with age but full of stories, is an institution still found in most houses where the joint family system exists. Stories of gods and goddesses engaged in a battle of good and evil, the ideal love of the brother Lakshman for his elder Ram, the devotion of Hanuman to



Ram and Sita, Kaikeyi, the wicked stepmother, the pranks of Krishna when he was a child, Yuddhisthir as a man of truth, Eklavya as the symbol of ideal disciple, and numerous others are such stories which have not gone stale with repetition. In many cases the tone of the story remains amoral and free of inhibitive tendencies which most adapted versions exclude. The settings of most myths and epics are, however, woven into the fabric of the story and the content perforce remains unchanged. Thus polygamy is the rule rather than the exception where kings were concerned, and wicked *asuras* (demons) who carry off girls to their dens are as much a part of traditional lore as children born out of wedlock. Oral rendering of such lore is common to every regional language and dialect i.e. Bhojpuri, Bengali, Marathi, Gujarati, Malayalam, Tamil, Telugu, and Hindi. In the English language, imaginative and inspired translations are found in such collections as *Tales from Indian Classics*, the *Panchatantra Tales*, and many others in a series of hardbound volumes brought out mainly by the Children's Book Trust, *Jataka Tales* published by Echo, Lalvani Brothers, India Book House, Somiaya Publications, Thompson Press, Oxford University Press and many other regional publishers.

Children's literature in Bengali has deep ancient roots both orally and in the written form. Translations of Indian classics and mythology into Bengali language appear as early as the beginning of the eighteenth century. Middle Eastern literature specially the tales of Arabia and Persia has been imported and adapted to such an extent that a Bengali child considers it part of his own rich heritage. Children's literature in Bengali language was well disciplined by publication of a children's magazine by two brilliant writers: Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar and Aukhoy Kumar Dutta. They can well be hailed as the architects of children's literature in Bengal. These established writers also contributed a number of small books for children. These books, albeit written in an archaic style, are still sought after today by parents and teachers alike. A period of prolific creativity in poetry followed, and fresh, lively renderings of the rules and laws of arithmetic in humorous verse appeared for the first time. Needless to say they are popular with children to this day. Bengali children's literature is marked by the keen interest taken in it by every man of letters. This interest has given it a status and style enjoyed by none of the other regional literatures for children. This feature is quite exclusive to Bengali children's literature. The association of such names as Rabindranath Tagore, Keshav Chand Sen, and Shastri with juvenile literature has raised it to the pinnacle. Although the production of books in terms of illustration, typography, and design is not of high standard, the extraordinarily well-written texts often lead the reader to overlook the physical appearance of the books.

In the beginning of the twentieth century, a noted man of letters Upendra Kishore Roy brought out the highly reputed monthly children's magazine *Sandesh*, which still enjoys the privilege of being the most popular magazine. Apart from *Sandesh*, numerous children's magazines appeared in print and a few have survived so far. A multitude of gifted writers like D. R. M. Majumdar and Yogindranath produced a rich and diverse literature for the children. Their themes and plots are striking in that they touch upon common and basic problems of life like sickness, hunger, work, and loyalty in the form of fantasy in a way that is appreciated by children of all ages. Satyajit Ray, Lila Majumdar, Kishore Bharati, Sukhatara, and Ananda are other major personalities who contributed a lot in the proper growth and nourishment of children literature.



The late Daksshinaranjan Mitra Majumdar (1877-1957) was arguably the most well known and popular writer of children's books in Bengali during the first decades of the 20th century. His range was wide and varied, his output was prolific, and his *métier* was the genre of fairy tales and fantasy. The 'jewel in the crown' of his large volume of work was undoubtedly his *Thakurmar Jhuli* (Grandma's Bag of Tales) published around 1907. It has remained in continuous print, adored by children and adult alike. In the olden days, when we had the abundance of joint families, it was somewhat customary for the grandmothers to round up the children in the evening and tell them the stories full of wondrous elements and fantasy, employing appropriate gestures and mimicry to transport the listeners to the make-believe world of fairies and demons, of winged horses and talking birds, of daring prince and adorable princesses. The unique quality that marks the stories of *Thakurmar Jhuli* is the preservation of the oral style; an attempt to recover the fast-disappearing heritage of fairy tales that were once an oral legacy of every Indian child. These stories are not merely to amuse and entertain children. They serve a greater purpose. Behind these wondrous elements and fantastic world, we without any fail discern some rudimentary morals, values, and principles which operate deeply in our day-to-day modern and postmodern life. These small bags of fairy tales and fantasy contain in themselves something which any school teacher in any school cannot render to his/her students. This bag of grandma is full of gems like commonsense, humility, decency, bravery, discipline, loyalty, and many other positive values for our own small children which are essential for the betterment any civilized society.

*The Winged Horse: Fairy-tales from Bengal* is a beautiful collection of fairy tales, rendered into English by Sukhendu Ray from Daksshinaranjan Mitra Majumdar's *Thakurmar Jhuli*. There are six stories. Each one of them is unique. I have selected some of them to show how the elements of fairy and fantasy have the capacity to deliver some useful and valid observations on elementary values, morals, and principles. The very first story of this collection "Kiranmala" in its opening, talks about the responsibilities of a royal king. A King should not merely involve himself in hunting and idle chatting, but he should assume a disguised form to roam around the kingdom to feel the real pulse of the subjects. This story talks about permanent presence of certain human feelings like craving of money and power, greed, and envy. When the youngest sister and now the queen of the king is on the verge of delivery, her elder sisters are full of venom and befool the king thrice by telling him that instead of delivering actual sons and daughter she has given birth to a puppy, a kitten, and a wooden doll respectively. By God's grace these three issues of her are sent to a rich Brahmin. Now pure fantasy comes in full force and we find how these brothers (Arun and Varun) and sister (Kiranmala) perform wonderful deeds. They build a colossal palace which becomes the object of envy even for the king. With the suggestion and help of a holy man they set out to bring diamond branch for the bird of gold, fruits of gold on silver trees to decorate the palace even more. The brothers fail to achieve this but a girl (Kiranmala) succeeds. In this way the very first story of this collection makes a very bold and pertinent statement regarding the high status of girl child in a patriarchal society. This story also talks about the proper employment of commonsense by making the king realize how a woman can deliver a puppy or a kitten or even a wooden doll.

"Sheeth and Vasanth" is a story of a king and his two queens. It again talks about

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the presence of common human frailties like anger and envy. The younger queen has two sons and the elder has none. Isn't it enough to breed the feelings of envy and anger? Yes, it is. The elder queen with the help of a magical pill turns the younger queen into a parrot and then pretends to have a fatal disease which can only be cured by the blood of parrot queen's sons. By now she has her own three sons but as "thin as bamboo reeds, as frail as bamboo leaves!" (19) This is adding fuel to fire. The poor king would do nothing but orders his servant to kill Sheeth and Vasanth. The executioner turns out to be a man of mercy so he frees them. Now the role of fantasy is in full swing. Sheeth with a miracle becomes the king of a kingdom and Vasanth receives education from a saint. Meanwhile the dictum as you sow so shall you reap turns out to be true as the elder queen now becomes a beggar and the king has lost his kingdom.

Now the parrot queen is with a princess who is grown enough to be married. She has everything except the Ivor Gem. So she takes a vow to marry only that prince who could bring her the Ivor Gem. Now the old hermit's place has two birds: the male bird Sook and his wife Sari. One day Sari is talking to Sook: about a Sea of Cream on a milk-white peak where the Ivor Gem plays hide and seek. Beneath it on the sea there are a thousand lotus flowers of gold. There is also an elephant white crowned on the head by the Ivor Gem bright. With the help of hermit in the form of his trident and Simul tree in the form of his princely robe and coronet he successfully obtained his desired object and three gold fishes which later on turned out to be his cousins.

Then the parrot queen reveals the truth that the man with Ivor Gem is nobody but her own son. Out of joy the princess strokes the parrot queen gently and orders the attendant to bring fresh milk and turmeric paste for she will give her a bath. With the bath the magical pill comes unstuck and she turns into a beautiful and younger queen. Now Sheeth, Vasantha with his wife Roopavati, their mother and old father, and three sons of elder queen meet and they live happily ever after. In this way we see that this story beautifully spreads the message for love sympathy, kindheartedness, and humility not only to human beings but to animals and birds also.

"Neelkamal and Lalkamal" is a beautiful fairy tale dealing with the clash between good and bad; virtue and vice in the form of fantasy. It is an archetypal clash in which good and virtue ultimately obliterate bad and vice. The good ones are the king, his younger wife, his elder son Ajit (the son of elder queen, a *Raksashi*), and his younger son Kusum. Though Ajit is the son of *Raksashi* queen, he is not altogether devil. He is a man of virtue and goodness. He loves his cousin too much. He knows the ill desire of his mother to drink the blood of Kusum, that's why he never leaves the company of him. One day it so happens that a huge male demon picked up Kusum. Ajit fought very well to save his brother but could not help him as the demon has made him a ball of gold. In the utter fury the *Raksashi* queen eats her own son up and turns him into a ball of iron. Then she buries both the balls under a bamboo. In the morning a farmer finds the balls and throws them on the ground. The balls break and out of them two princes Lalkamal and Neelkamal come.

They, by the passage of time, reach to a kingdom which is deeply ridden with the terror of Khokkash ogres. By the nightfall these ogres arrive and gobble up some people. The princes assured the king to relieve him by killing these ogres. They massacre all the Khokkash by their courage, bravery and intelligence. Now two demons Aye and Kye report it to the *Raksashi* queen, the mother of Ajit. She sends Aye and Kye to kill them. Aye and Kye assume the form of two human soldiers and ask the princes to



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bring the fat from the brain of a *Raksash*. The princes set out for this. After a long journey they meet a pair of birds? Bengama and his wife Bengami. The princes give their chicks some blood as they cannot see. Now the chicks open their eyes and help the princes by mounting them on their back to fly all around the world. After a long journey they reach the land of demons. After a long battle they successfully obliterate even a single existence of demon from the universe.

"Princess Kalavati" is another beautiful story full of wondrous elements. It talks about the story of a king and his seven queens who fail to deliver any child. By the grace of a holy man and his root of a tree five of the queens managed to have one son each, but as the fourth queen and the little queen do not take the root in its prescribed form they simply give birth to owl and monkey respectively. The five princes are named Hira, Manik, Moti, Sankha, and Kanchan. The owl is named Bhutum and the monkey is named Buddhu. This story nicely employs maximum of fantastic elements as Bhutum and Buddhu talk in human language, Kalavati lives under water, peacock boat, three witches, huge python, the golden bird, and so many others. The whole story is about the mad pursuit of five princes after Kalavati without involving any sense, and the sensible behaviour of two non-human beings as one is owl and other is monkey. This story is reverberating with teaching/ value that it is not at all necessary for all human beings to be sensible, ardent, intelligent, and wise. While an owl and a monkey who do not have enough brain to judge the things, if given chance and opportunity, can excel any human being in the performance of sensibility and sagaciousness. Throughout the story we find how ungrateful the five princes are as Bhutum and Buddhu always save them out of fraternal love, while they always cheated them. They show their full disrespect for Bhutum and Buddhu. This story rightly pictures human beings as nothing but the bundle of all the earthly shortcomings.

*The Winged Horse* as a collection of fairy tales and fantasy is potential enough to deal with elementary and rudimentary aspects of those philosophies of life which are essential in the formation of a healthy civilization. Children and adult alike can easily identify themselves with the multidimensional landscapes of these stories. These stories beautifully raise the question of true essence of life and its true identity whether inclusive or exclusive. They make very valid commentary on our place in the world, the culture in which we live, about why we suffer, and give us some *mantra* to live a balanced life. It can only be performed when we are beyond our daily hardships of life and transport ourselves into the world of wondrous elements and fantasy. Through this willing suspension of disbelief we can earn panaceas to live a fulfilling life in real world. And as Loy and Goodhew suggest that consciously or unconsciously stories weave a complicated, often confusing world and give us models how to live in it, then certainly children's literature in the garb of fantasy might offer some truths that mainstream realism cannot (*The Dharma of Dragons and Daemons* 1). After all each of us need a story to survive; or don't we live in fantasy stories? Yes, we do live.

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# A Journey from Epic Saga to Post Modernism: Reading J. K. Rowling

Debadrita Bose

There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, than are dreamt of in your philosophy (*Hamlet*, Act 1, sc v)

This is what Hamlet said to Horatio when he doubted of the supernatural existence off the ghost. J.K. Rowling and other writers of fantasy delve into these "things" which are not to be defined by Horatio's philosophy. *The Harry Potter* series is perhaps the most widely read, widely discussed Children's Literature of our century. However it is noteworthy that as the story of Harry grows the book gradually ceases to be just another work of literature meant to be read by children. By the time Rowling has completed the seventh book, the story of Harry has become almost a classic. It is not only a repertoire of fantasy but also a work of genuine craftsmanship inviting much scope of interpretation from various modes of thinking. It contains characteristics of varied literary genres, encompassing elements from various fields of literary and cultural theories and the wide texture of linguistic symbolism adds to the richness of its narrative structure.

There are prominent generic fusions in *Harry Potter*. It is a journey on the part of the author from Epic to Science fiction. Harry Potter is no doubt an epic hero of the modern times. He is the central figure on whom is bestowed the fate of a community. In a land of magic he takes up his responsibility and ventures in a quest that would finally save his race from the clutches of evil and his achievements in the face of danger will elevate him to a lofty position. It also agrees with Aristotle's concept of Unity, Entirety and Greatness of Action as necessary criteria of an epic. There are several flashbacks and the series is of great national significance. The hero goes on perilous journeys and his ultimate mission is to save both the magical and the non-magical communities from evil. The books deal with one central action, the defeat of Voldemort by Harry, which has been anticipated and developed through all the books culminating in the last. In Harry we find characteristic features of a Romantic hero also. The greatest mystery around him is that he is the boy who lived and he learns in the course of his development as a wizard that he has to become the symbol of goodness, hope and love and finally overcome the supreme forces of evil. Maria Nikolajeva claims,

He bears the mark of the chosen on his forehead, and he is worshiped in the wizard community as the future savior. The pattern is easily recognizable from world mythologies, even though Harry is not claimed to be a god or a son of god. (226)

Aristotle spoke of tragic hero as "a man not pre-eminently virtuous or just, whose misfortune, however, is brought upon him not by vice or depravity but by some error of judgement" (926). There is one character in *Harry Potter* who comes under this category, but it is not Harry. Who then makes an error of judgment so that tragic fall becomes eminent? Severus Snape seems most to be the most appropriate character to fit in as a tragic hero. He has never been a man of vice, however in his youth by some error of judgment he chose the dark side and retribution came swiftly. Soon Lily, whom he loved, was killed by Voldemort and in spite of returning to the good side he lost his life.

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Tragedy is that, few did understand Snape's proper intentions, even though he lost his life at a noble battle. For one misjudgment he had to suffer all his life, playing the role of a double agent, a puppet not in the hands of Destiny but Dumbledore. He became a scapegoat at the alter of noble causes.

Elements from the genres of Mystery, Horror and Crime Fictions find their way in the Potter books. At every bend in the plot awaits a mystery to be solved. The secrets of the secret chamber in book 2, the maze of the triwizard tournament, the secret riddles, the house of the Black, the department of mystery at the ministry of magic, in book 4, the horcruxes and the hallows all create a willing suspension of disbelief. Similarly some of the mimetic narratives describing certain eerie places and situation in the books are spine chilling to the highest degree. The description of the dungeon under the trap door in book 1, the chamber of secrets in book 2, the graveyard in book 4, the archway and the veil in book 5, the lake in the cave in book 6 propose terror. The castle of Hogwarts itself is Gothic in its mood. The most important paradigm of narrative in crime fiction is the commission and detection of crime. The structure is repeated several times in the books of Rowling. In every book some kind of a crime is committed like the opening of the chamber of secret, or the plotting of Voldermort's re-birth at the graveyard and Harry, Ron or Hermione or Dumbledore or the Order of the Phoenix detects the crime and unmasks the criminal.

*Harry Potter* has in it several characteristics of a Science Fiction. The Philosopher's Stone and the Elixir of life in the initial book are products of Chemistry. The time shifts and space shifts also contribute to this criterion. The Blast-ended skrewts is a hybrid and the Hippogriff or the Thestrals can be taken as missing links. The subjects like Transfiguration, Herbology and Astronomy are subjects formed out of scientific consciousness. All these are camouflaged as magical inventions but they are commentaries on man's development in Science and Technology when Science can be seen as a theory behind magic. The world of magic is a kind of utopia for Harry; he is overwhelmed by the shops at Diagon alley and longs to be at Hogsmeade and Honeydukes the sweet shop where any child's wildest dream of sweets can come true. The kinds of sweets at Honeydukes like acid pops, fizzing whizzbees, pepper imps which can make one breathe fire, ice mice that hop realistically in the stomach, cockroach clusters and many more are closely reminiscent of the sweets manufactured by Willy Wonka in Roald Dahl's book *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*. At Wonka's factory Charlie sees sweets like snozzberries and mint jujubes that turn the eater's teeth green and also the square sweets that look round. In the last book, when Harry is killed by Voldemort he wakes up and finds himself in a lonely place, where a creature whimpers in pain but he is unable to help him, where he meets the dead Dumbledore. It is a picture of an almost post apocalyptic world.

Along with elements of Gothic and science Fiction, the elements of magic Realism are very prominent in Rowling's books. The magical world of Harry is a virtual world juxtaposed against the non-magical world; hence there is a juxtaposition of magical and realistic elements throughout the entire space of the seven books. The way magic has been presented in the books, it never intervenes in the progressive non-magic world, however they co-exist. Dreams play a very significant role in the Potter series. Every time Harry dreams he anticipates a future development or manages to gain



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insight into his surroundings. Visions and hallucinations, fairies and giants, ghosts and dragons, death and immortality all exist in the magical world. However in her narrative of magic Rowling never loses her grip of reality. When Harry hears voices in book 2 he is warned that hearing voices which others cannot is treated as curious even in the magical world. There are time shifts in the forms of the time turner, the pensive, the mirror of Erised and Riddle's diary. The boggart is a shape-shifter and several space shifts can be seen when people apparate, travel by portkeys and floo powders. Harry shifts in his dream several times from one place to another. People change into animals and can transfigure animals into objects and vice versa.

In *Harry Potter* elements of black comedy or dark comedy are very prominent and thus it also incorporates elements of the absurd. In a black comedy humor or laughter is generated from macabre and gruesome situations which would otherwise have created a sense of nausea or fear. Nearly Headless Nick is nearly headless because his head had not been completely severed from his body; it hangs as if fixed on hinges. He swings off his head by pulling his ears and the head rests on his shoulder displaying the hollow insides of his neck. On eating Fred and George's toffee, Dudley's tongue starts growing and takes the appearance of an elephant's trunk and his mother tries to pull it out of his mouth. These evoke laughter instead of horror. Absurdism is very common in all the seven books. The death day party of a ghost is absurd.

*Harry Potter* is a wonderful example of Bildungsroman. Bildungsroman is an account of the processes of development of a hero or heroine. It describes the processes by which maturity is gained through the various ups and downs of life. All the seven books of Rowling comprise a story of a journey made by the central protagonist from innocence through various psychological, physical and environmental setbacks to a state of maturity and understanding of the world around him.

The use of Bakhtinian Carnavalesque is very prominent in this series. Carnavalesque in a broader sense denotes a reversal of the natural order. It is characterized by burlesque, parody and personal satire. The notion that a young boy of eleven enters into a magical world and soon shoulders the responsibility of saving an entire community does not agree with normal social norms. Authority is bestowed on him at an age when children are dictated by their elders. In this sense most of the children's literatures are examples of Carnavalesque as they portray children in authorial positions. There are other forms of Carnavalesque in *Harry Potter*. In book 3, the Boggart assumes the shape of professor Snape dressed in a long, lace trimmed dress and a vulture stuffed hat, the kind of dress Neville's grandmother usually wear. Similarly the animagus, the person who can change himself into a particular animal assumes the appearance of an animal, McGonagall becomes a cat, and Sirius becomes a dog and so on. Professor Lupin becomes a werewolf on every night of full moon. In book 7, six characters take the appearance of Harry by drinking polyjuice potion; two of them are girls who turn into boys.

In the magical world of Harry, meanings, identities and ideas constantly slip. The polyjuice potion can turn males into females and vice versa. Similarly, the animagi can at will take shape and appearance of an animal. Hence there is no constant meaning, the line of demarcation between male and female, between man and animal



is constantly blurred. Voldemort splits his soul into seven parts and places them inside inanimate objects and his snake nagini. A part of his soul finds refuge inside Harry's body. Hence his identity is incomplete. Who do we call Voldemort then? The man who walks with that name, the snake or a cup or a locket which contain part of his soul? Similarly Harry is not entirely and completely Harry if he is carrying a part of Voldemort inside himself and can delve into his moods and thoughts. Voldemort has the same access to Harry's mind. Professor Quirell in book 1 is the man with two faces; He carries Voldemort behind his head. Again there is the same confusion of identity. Who is Quirell and who is Voldemort? Hence no particular centre of meaning is prominent in the hierarchies like good/ evil, male/ female, man/ animal.

The books have strong elements of dream in them. The dreams express the inner workings of Harry's mind. According to Freud, dreams always express the repressed desires and fears. These include: displacement, in which one person is represented by another who is in some way linked with the former and condensation, whereby number of people, events or meanings are combined and represented in a dream. In book 5, he dreams "he is back in the DA room. Cho was accusing him of luring her under false pretences; she said he had promised her a hundred and fifty chocolate frog cards if she showed up" (408). Harry's dream expresses his repressed desire, fear and agony. He dreams of Cho accusing her because he is in a sense of insecurity about his own relationship with Cho, as the image of Cedric is a constant threat. The chocolate frog cards symbolize Dumbledore for him, because in his first year the first chocolate frog card he got had the name of Dumbledore on it. That was when he first met with Dumbledore's appearance. The present less than friendly behavior of Dumbledore towards him is a cause of agony and disappointment. Most of Harry's other dreams express his fear of Voldemort or his desire of reunion with his parents.

The Mirror of Erised also shows the inner desires of the person who looks into it. It shows Harry with his parents, it shows Ron as head boy and Quidditch captain. There are other elements in the novels to enhance the psychological drama. The dementors symbolize depression and the thestrals fear.

The world of Harry Potter is a patriarchal world. No doubt characters like Hermione, McGonagall and Bellatrix Lestrange are given strong personalities and they stand upright beside men. But it is essentially a man's world. We come across gender stereotypes as we go through the novels. The central protagonist is a boy and he meets his most hated enemy in a man. Dumbledore shows Harry the path which he has to follow. When Harry and Ron stand upright in the face of danger Hermione shrieks and is terrified even though she is the most intelligent student of her class. She cannot handle the mountain troll all by herself but is rescued by Ron and Harry. In the Triwizard tournament Fleur is chosen, but she is the one who receives the lowest score and she is the one who is hindered by the Grindylows when her other three male competitors succeed in the tasks they were assigned. Inside the maze also Fleur shows signs of fear and weakness. She had been good enough to enter the tournament, however all she does after her marriage is the menial, domestic housework. The Fat Lady cannot stand up to Sirius Black and would not return to her job; on the other hand Sir Cadogan takes up the post left by the Fat Lady. In the final battle Bellatrix shows extreme valor but she is only second to Voldemort who by gender is a male. Merope Riddle, the



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mother of Voldemort has been presented as weak and pathetic. She is victim to two insensitive male members of her family.

Queer theory in a broader sense means the breaking of established norms. "Queer theory does replace one norm with another, but claims that all conditions are equally normal. Queer studies test how we can exchange an established pattern, in the case of children's literature, adult normativity, for another one, and examine what happens with the child in power as norm and the powerless child a deviation." (227) In *Harry Potter* novels the adult authority is considered norm. Though Harry is bestowed with enormous power and the responsibility of saving the wizarding world, he is always guided by the adults. The powerful weapon of Harry, the invisibility cloak is also given to him as an inheritance by Dumbledore, the adult on whose direction Harry has to keep on walking in order to achieve his goal. However that does not stop him from breaking school rules or expressing his disgust towards a particular teacher or a subject. He even shifts his focus at a time from the way Dumbledore had shown him and takes interest in the hallows instead of the horcruxes. In spite of Harry's carnival position the adults dictate and guide the young. Dumbledore confides in Snape, a grown up about the secret that Harry contains a part of Voldemort inside himself, but the truth is denied to Harry until the time comes when the adults will consider to appropriate to disclose all the secrets to him. Snape says to Dumbledore in book 7, "You have kept him alive so that he can die at the right time?" (551) In fact Harry is thrust into this position of power by the handiwork of the adults. Had Trelawney never made the prediction that Voldemort will be challenged by a boy born in the end of July, had Snape not eavesdropped on her, Voldemort might never have killed Harry's parents and a scarless Harry would have enjoyed magical education without any burden of responsibility.

We come across a hint of a homoerotic love between the young Dumbledore and young Grindelwald. Dumbledore confesses to Harry in Book 7, "Grindelwald, You cannot imagine how his ideas caught me, Harry, inflamed me." (573) Their ideas matched, and the understanding between them was so intense that they spent whole days discussing things and at night also exchanged owls. It was Grindelwald who first ignited the spirits of Dumbledore and he acted accordingly.

Marginalization is a constant theme in the *Harry Potter* books. There are significant constructions of power structures. The battle over pure bloods and mudbloods in the magical world starts with the dawn of history. Salazar Slytherin, one of the founders of Hogwarts refused to accept students coming from muggle families or students who were halfbloods and the battle continues until the end of Book 7. We see people like the Malfoys and the Blacks boasting of their blood status, and they look down upon the mudbloods. Merope was rebuked by her father for not being able to perform magic and liking a muggle. Some of the people in the magical society ridicule those who have strong muggle affinity like Arthur Weasley. In fact Voldemort's intention was to free the magical world from all the muggles. The regime of Voldemort echoes Hitler's regime in Germany. Voldemort wanted all power of the magical community to be centralized in his hands and very much like Hitler he attempted to propagate an idea that he was all wise and anyone who was prone to mistakes will improve his ability once brought under his control. Voldemort made unreasonable demands and



threatened war if they were not met. He too, intended to establish a new order and killed immense number of non-magical blood and also wizards when they stood up to him just like Hitler. Thus, Voldemort's mass killing is closely reminiscent of the Holocaust. Under Voldemort's rule the previous statue of magical brethren which showed a wizard, a witch, a goblin and a house elf together, symbolizing equality of status was replaced by the sculpture of magic is might, where wizards were seen towering over masses of wretched muggles.

Not only Voldemort's ideas of supremacy but also in various levels of the wizarding world we see structures of power and in undoing this the Ideological State apparatuses of the magical community is questioned. There are Squibs who are unable to perform magic even though they originated from magical blood. The Squibs are looked down upon and the Ministry of Magic does not keep records of them in their registers as they would have done in a case of a wizard. Thus, instead of their blood status they are discarded from the magical society. The wizards are in a constant war with the goblins. The history of this world as narrated by Rowling in her books, does not give us facts about who overruled whom, but we find wizards talking in a non-chalant manner about the goblins. The wizards and the goblins fight over the possession of treasure. However the goblins enjoy a superior status in the magical community unlike the house-elves. The elves are the servants of the wizards and they are tied with the family they serve. They are more slaves than servants. They are not allowed any pay or holidays. The power rests on a wizard to dismiss an elf wherever and whoever he pleases. It is interesting to note that the elves do not find this system degrading; rather they do their best to be loyal to the family they serve. In the family of the Blacks it was a custom to behead an elf when it became too old to carry a tea tray. Willingly they succumb to the rule that if an elf speaks ill of his family, he has to punish himself. They find it degrading to be a free elf like Dobby, or to take wages for their labor. This is an excellent example of the idea of political hegemony put forward by Antonio Gramsci. Where the Goblins strive for their positions in the society, the elves succumb to their slave like existence. The wizards in general believe themselves to be superior to those creatures to which wands are denied and hence out of this sense of superiority they consider themselves fit enough to dictate and control the lives of creatures like goblins and elves. Griphook, a goblin in book 7 says, "Wizards refuse to share the secrets of wandlore with other magical beings, they deny us the possibility of extending our powers." (395) The power of carrying wands is almost similar to the privilege of being white. Edward said has claimed in *Culture and Imperialism* that a white middle-class westerner believes it his human prerogative not only to manage the non-white world but also to own it, just because by definition it is not quite as human as we are.

The giants and the werewolves are also discarded from the society. It was the wizards who drove away the giants and they took refuge in the mountains. Hagrid had to face tantrums are threats for being a part-human. Professor Lupin had to resign from his job as soon as Snape disclosed that he was a werewolf. Cornelias Fudge thinks Dumbledore's idea of becoming friendly with the giants is ludicrous. There is a hint that the British wizards are superior to the foreign wizards. Divination, a subject which has eastern origin is looked down upon. Though initially Harry went out with Cho, he finally chose Ginny as his life partner, rather instead of an Asian women, he



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chose a British woman as a partner. In the Yule ball Ron's focus rested upon the white Hermione instead of the non-white Padma. The rich like the Malfoys never keep from insulting those who are poor like the Weasleys.

As in the magical world, some wizards have a notion of superiority over the muggles; similarly, in the non magical world the muggles have a sense of reservation towards the wizards. Lily Potter was called a sneak for being a witch by her sister Petunia. The Dursleys have a strong dislike for all the wizards. Mr. Dursleys is shocked to hear that some of the wizards cannot drive. Tom Riddle senior would never have fallen for Merope if she had not used a love potion in the first place. As soon as he was out of the trance of the potion, knowing that his wife was a witch he left her and rejoined his non magic parents. The Muggle Prime minister is irritated whenever he is dictated by the wizards.

The societies, both the magical and the non-magical have fixed norms and beliefs. Any individual who tries to break such rules risk being shunned by the society. Michael Foucault is vocal in summarizing this kind of social behavior. He observed, "Individuals working within particular discursive practices cannot think or speak without obeying the unspoken 'archive' or rules and constraints; otherwise they risk being condemned to madness or silence" (189). In the Potter books we find instances of such silencing. Luna Lovegood and her father are considered weird as they break traditional wizarding ideas. Luna wears radish like plants as ornaments. She and her father go in search of Wrackspurts and Crumple-horned Snorkacks of the existence of which most of the wizards never agree. Similarly Mr. and Mrs. Dursley in their ambition to be perfectly normal nourish a constant fear that what will happen if somebody found out their association with the wizards. Book 1 open as: "Mr. and Mrs. Dursley of number four Privet Drive, were proud to say that they were perfectly normal, thank you very much" (8)

The magical world comprises a symbiotic existence between man and nature unlike the non magical world. Nature plays a vital role though sometimes nature is used for anthropocentric causes. The Whomping Willow was planted because Lupin came to Hogwarts. It was planted so that he could sneak out at night and move to the Shrieking Shack for his transformation into a werewolf. The willow prevented others from accidentally falling in a werewolf's way. Buckbeak, the Hippogrif is sentenced to death for attacking a human. On the other hand the uncivilized live comfortably with nature. The house of Marvolo is partly covered by bushes and shrubs and it has been called an eyesore by a muggle.

In the *Harry Potter* there is no single reference to God. In every book we come across Christmas, Easter and Halloween celebrations but they are presented as cultural elements rather than religious. However, it is interesting to note that it is altogether a Christian world. Starting with the festivities that are essentially Christian, there are other symbolic references to Christianity. The seven deadly sins and the seven heavenly virtues are very prominently personified here. Bellatrix symbolize wrath, Mundungus symbolize greed, Cornelius fudge symbolize sloth, Pansy Parkinson symbolize pride, Rita Skeeter has lust, Voldemort is symbolic of envy and Goyle and Crabbe are symbolic of gluttony. On the other hand, McGonagall symbolize prudence, Dumbledore



symbolize justice, Hermione symbolize restraint and Harry symbolizes courage. Faith, hope and Charity are the virtues to be seen in the magical world striving to fight for good against evil. It is a moral fable where we are to choose between good and evil. Harry is the symbol of goodness and thus in the moments of acute crisis he does not use spells like Avada Kedavra.

*Harry Potter* novels echo and reflect myths, legends and ideas from various literary texts. There are references to philosopher's stone and elixir of life. Like the children in C.S. Lewis's books *The Lion, the witch and the Wardrobe*. Harry is transported from the non-magical world to a magical world. There are more than one parallel with J.R.R. Tolkien's series *The Lord of the Rings*. Harry and Ron resemble Frodo Baggins and Samwise Gamgee respectively and Dumbledore and Sirius resemble Gandalf and Aragorn respectively. The house elves definitely look like and speak like Gollum and Fred and George are like Merry and Pippin. Like in Lewis Carol's *Through the Looking Glass*, mirrors play a significant role in Rowling's books. The mirror of Erised was instrumental for getting the stone, the broken mirror in book 7 saved Harry and his friends from Malfoy manor. Sirius Black is named after a constellation, which is also known as 'the dog star' and Sirius can turn himself into a dog. Similarly, Lupin's first name is Remus and he is a werewolf. This brings in the mythological story of Romulus and Remus. Romulus and Remus were two brothers left to die in their infancy by their grandfather's brother, Amulias, but a she-wolf suckled them and saved them. The art of potion making and the ingredients used are a repetition of the scene of Macbeth where the three witches make a potion. The Hippogriff is an animal to be found in Ludovico Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso*.

them to the castle high above us, the lord  
of which they wanted to meet in combat—the one  
who in full armor soars through the air aboard  
the remarkable hippogryph. (36)<sup>11</sup>

There are a number of analogies that refer to hidden meanings. The spells have meanings, Avada Kedavra, the killing curse is related to the word cadaver, The Cruciatus curse comes from the Latin word 'Crucio' which means to torture. Lumos the charm that gives light is associated with the word illumination. Salazar Slytherin's name is associated with the slithering movement of the snake for his close connection with the snakes. Gryffidor comes from griffin which are half-lion and half-eagle. Grindelwald is perhaps a reference to Grendel, the monster who was defeated by Beowulf. The surname Lestrangle is associated with estrangement. In Potterwatch, Kingsley takes the name Royal; Lee Jordon takes the name River. The pets have symbolic connections with their masters, as Dumbledore has a phoenix as his pet, which signifies re-birth. Dumbledore comes back in Harry's aid at king's cross, though not in the means of re-birth but as a reincarnation. Harry's pet Hedwig is loyal like Harry. Madam Maxime is of the maximal height among all the wizards. Knockturn alley is a rhyme to the nocturnally.

The narrative of Rowling agrees with thirteen functions proposed by Vladimir Propp. At first the villain harms the family members of the hero, the hero is tested and then receives the help of a magical agent like the invisibility cloak. The hero goes in a search, as in the Triwizard tournament and finally joins the villain in a direct combat,



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where the villain is defeated. Finally a difficult task is proposed to the hero like the destroying of the Horcruxes, which is resolved and the villain is punished. The hero is married. The story is told in both mimetic with several degrees of mimesis and diegetic techniques as required and there is a constant internal focalization. There are several instances of metanarratives and analeptic handling of time. There is Hamartia in characters like Snape and in smaller degrees in Dumbledore.

Rowling is a master story teller. Her books on Harry Potter are a work of the twenty first century reflecting a vast tradition of past literatures. The elements of mystery, riddle and horror is completely balanced with realistic elements and writing for children as well as for young adults, Rowling never forgets to cater to the psychological needs of the adolescent. The linguistic symbols used invite and challenge the readers to grasp the innuendos. The series is a work of genius to be read and re-read by all ages and all generations.

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## Ngugi wa Thiong'o's Children's Literature in Kenya

Jaysukh Dhirubhai Hirpara

Ngugi wa Thiong'o has been writing since the days of the African Renaissance in the 1950's and has enriched the corpus of African literature through his varied writing. His ideological stand is made clear in his radical, polemical and critical essays. They have justified his perception of Africa in his interviews and journalistic essays. But it is the novels that he brings out his creative talent and imaginative skill in portraying Africa.

Ngugi belongs to Kenya in the East Africa. He belongs to the prominent tribe of his country, Gikuyu. The formative education that he had in the Christian Missionary school, the socio-economic background of his family and the political atmosphere in which he grew have a telling effect on the development of his ideology. Ngugi, a champion of the Mau Mau, a crusader against the Neo-Colonial hegemony in modern Kenya, owes his debt to Marxist ideology and has now become a Socialist Realist in fiction. The fictional works of Ngugi have been studied from various theoretical stand points in recent years. There are also many cultural studies of his fiction. In his works we find his continuing crusade against the Capitalist and the Neo-colonial forces operating in Africa.

In 1973 James Olney commented on Ngugi's "paradoxical politics of reactionary revolution" and expressed his view that most other African novelists would disagree with him. He quoted Achebe and Soyinka in support of his contention and said:

Ngugi seems to want to make his past his future: he would revive social and cultural structures of the past as a reality of the future, and what he calls for to accomplish this is a present revolution not to achieve something new but to restore an ideal precolonial state that he, at least, takes to have been of original peace, harmony, justice, and goodness. (Olney 284)

Olney, obviously, was referring to the two parallel and simultaneous movements visible in Ngugi's thought: while socially and politically he was moving in a more radical and revolutionary direction, morally and culturally he was moving in the direction of a more pronounced traditionalism. Marxist socialism was the decisive influence on his political and social thought while Christianity and African tradition were the leading influences on its moral and cultural aspects.

For many years, "Kenya's indigenous culture has been passed on from one generation to another through narratives, songs, proverbs and riddles". (Mwanzi 1). Ngugi's portrayal of children in Kenya stories is based on Kenya's history of subjugation and exploitation. It is while reflecting on the sociological importance of literature for children that the role of the writer becomes crucial. The writer deliberately selects words to convey certain images, attitudes or ideologies that create a certain effect in the mind of the reader. These images tell us a great deal about their creator, his society and attitude to the situations and peoples so represented. They also highlight his world view.

Ngugi has written many books, plays and novels ranging from *Weep Not Child* (1964) to *Matigari* (1987) including children's books in the *Njamba Nene series* (1986). As early as 1964 Ngugi started writing about the history of Gikuyu people. He saw fiction not simply as communicative but also as something linked to the history of people. "Ngugi recognises the link between history and fiction. Indeed, for Ngugi, the

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narrative is a tool for shaping, ordering and re-interpreting history" (Ogude 27). Ogude is correct when he suggests rereading Ngugi's works looking beyond the current state of criticism, which has failed to locate Ngugi within the contested terrain of Kenya's historiography. He argues that "Ngugi's literature is real not necessarily because of its socialist bearing, but mostly because of his grand projet of writing back to colonialist historiography" (Ogude 2). This literature is linked to the interests of the workers in Kenya including his family (his father was known as a poor worker on a farm).

Ngugi's writing does not escape the notion of power. The question of power is central to Ngugi's critical discourse for very specific reasons:

he [Ngugi] came of age under the domination of the colonial state in Kenya at one of its most violent phases, the state of emergency in the 1950s; he matured as a writer in that unfortunate phase in African history when the liberal postcolonial state adopted the oppressive mechanism of the colonial predecessor (Gikandi 202).

It is not hard to find instances of Ngugi's strong criticism of imperialism. His goal in his literature was to show the bad experiences of victims of tyranny under the shadow of imperialism and economic exploitation. In its dependence on themes of decolonisation, the history of African writers falls into two groups. African writers such as Sembene Ousmane, Alex La Guma, Abiola Irele, Peter Nazareth, Lewis Nkosi and Amilcar Cabral manifested solidarity with the oppressed, but there was a remarkable use of European traditional techniques combined with modernistic modes of writing in their novels. Those writers seemed not to be so concerned with what is known as Africaneity (i.e. something purely or radically African in its nature), but this Africaneity does emerge in the works of a few writers such as Lewis Nkosi's *Home and Exile*, Ngugi wa Thiong'o's *Homecoming*, Peter Nazareth's *Literature and Society in Modern Africa*, Amilcar Cabral's *Return to Source*.

It is not, therefore, an exaggeration to note that Ngugi's literature cannot be understood outside its political and ideological interpretation. An apolitical reading cannot be suggested for Ngugi's works. There is always incompleteness in any apolitical reading of explicitly political works such as Ngugi's children's books. In considering the question of art as representation, as Lukas and others have noted, "the novelist works with one proposition in mind: "What is the nature of the reality his novels are supposed to recreate in a fictional universe? (Gikandi, 126)" For Ngugi, the realities of Kenya - the reality of people living without bread, exploited by capitalists, forced to speak English, deprived of the right to live according to their values - provide an answer to this question. It is in this context that Ngugi sees the struggle as the struggle for the nation and national consciousness. As such he portrays unashamedly the Mau Mau engaged in a struggle that would lead them to full expression in terms of their history and culture. This is not to say that Ngugi justifies the perpetrators for what they did, but rather that Ngugi's texts cannot be understood outside their socio-historical context.

It has been observed, however, that children's books written by Westerners about African stories often fail to operate in this way. This failure means that their texts do not achieve the communicative goal intended. It is within this context that Ngugi, in his *Writers In Politics*, addresses some of these issues. Central to his critique is the point that literature brought to Kenyan schools by Westerners did not reflect African reality but helped destroy it. He writes:

Literature reflects the life of a people. It reflects in word images, a people's creative consciousness of their struggles to mould nature through to co-operative labour in



word images a people's consciousness of the tensions and conflicts arising out of their struggles to mould a meaningful social environment founded on their combined actions on nature to wrest the means of life: clothing, food and shelter. (Ngugi 35)

This literature contains people's images of themselves in history and of their place in the universe. Ngugi argues that the images that were represented to a Kenyan child through the literature read in schools were not appropriate images. The children were made to look and analyse and evaluate the world as made and seen by Europeans. Worse, African children were confronted with a distorted image of themselves and their history as represented in European imperialist literature. In literature and movies, Ngugi found audiences were confronted with the ways in which the imperialist bourgeoisie saw the world. Africans never saw themselves represented or reflected on the screen and never reacted to or responded to themselves and their environment on the screen. They often applauded the superhuman feats of racist heroes of imperialism. Ngugi calls all this cultural imperialism.

This is what led him to make an appeal for reading and rethinking literature as he says: "it is time that we realised that the imperialist bourgeois experience of history as reflected in their art and literature is NOT the universal experience of history" (Ngugi : 1987, 38). In this way, Ngugi developed a critical mentality in people setting himself an example by writing a literature that makes him regarded today by the younger generation as probably the most important contemporary writer from the African continent. The child image represented through his literature is an African image: firstly by its link to African notions of childhood, and secondly by its link to African realities of life. Ngugi places the African child at the centre of his story. He provides for him or her images of his environment, of the things he knows. In this way, the narrative (novel) which used to be the private property of the elite and the white child and those who spoke English, was now read by different people ranging from the child to the layman on the street. They could read it and their beliefs and practices could agree with those of the writer - Ngugi.

The two children's books under analysis are Ngugi's *Njamba Nene and the Flying Bus* and *Njamba Nene's Pistol* published by East Africa Educatinal Publisher Limited, Nairobi, 1986.

Ngugi's *Njamba Nene and the Flying Bus* (1986, a) is strategically set in the Kenya of the 1950s, a time of turbulence. The storybook pulls us into the world of Kenya prior to its independence. This is the time when the colonial regime was finding it increasingly difficult to control a resistant population, which was demanding self-rule. Armed resistance was at its peak and so was colonial determination to crush it. The book opens with a description of a school life situation.

In this story Ngugi describes the trials that a Kenyan boy faced under colonialism. Njamba Nene, the son of Mother Wacu, is presented as a pupil in Tie and Tie African Primary School (TAPS) - TAPS was founded by a white settler, Mr. Pious Brainwash, for "the purpose of developing Africans who would think like Europeans and hold the same views about the world as they held. His aim was to cultivate a small group of Africans who had mouths legs, arms, hearts, everything like those of white people, so that if freedom fighters ever won the war, this group would act as the eyes, the ears, and the feet of those white people" (*Njamba Nene's Pistol* 5). It is in this school that the child hero starts his adventures. The second story, *Njamba Nene's Pistol*, is a compelling account of the turbulence that inflamed Kenya in the 1950s and its impact on people's lives. Njamba Nene is a young boy looking for a job in Limuru during the state of



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emergency. Jobless, tired and hungry, he accepts a mission from an unknown man to deliver a loaf of bread to the forest hideout of a Mau Mau general. During the adventures that follow, he escapes a trap by British and other government troops, and eventually he deliberately joins the freedom fighters. The story is imbued with political overtones and is illustrated with black and white drawings.

In *Njamba Nene's flying Bus*, we are told, for instance, that Brainwash sent the boy away from school as he said "Go! Your sins have driven you out of the school" (*Njamba Nene's flying Bus* 41)

Looking at these lines, we find that Ngugi translated or mimicked *the Bible*. He uses a wellknown biblical model to play with words. He has succeeded reproducing even the rhythm underlying Jesus' words. If we consider these few verses from *the Bible*:

Luke 5: 24 "I say to you, arise, take up your bed, and go to your house"

John 5: 8 "Jesus said to him, 'Rise, take up your bed and walk'"

Mark 5: 34 "And He said to her, 'Daughter your faith has made you well. Go in peace, and be healed of your afflictions.'"

(*The New Testament*, 1982)

It becomes clearer that his mimic really conveys the spirit of *the Bible*. But he does it in a reversed way. He falsifies *the Bible*. Maybe the message behind this falsification is that Missionaries, unlike Jesus, send people away from their schools instead of restoring them and sending them home glorifying God as Jesus did. In other words, they did not live the life they preached. A close look at this story shows that not only did Ngugi distort the message of *the Bible*, but also songs which refer to England. We are told that John Bull proposed a song, which was chanted in praise of London, the capital of England:

London's burner

London's burner

Firewood in the belly

Firewood in the belly

Fire is fire

Fire is fire

Boro, warm yourself

Boro, warm yourself

In her translation of this song (*Njamba Nene and the flying Bus*) Wangui wa Goro annotates that what children are singing here is "London's burning". They sing the English words as if they are Gikuyu words and reduce the song to utter nonsense. Ngugi falsified this song trying to show how the coloniser is burning. According to Ngugi, the coloniser had a power of destruction.

Class conflict is the most apparent feature in almost all the works by the writer. His children's books show how this social conflict has reached the point where people were exploiting children. This is illustrated through child labour as portrayed in one of his stories where Nene works and is denied his pay by the Indian businessman (representing the colonial system) he was working for. In other words, Ngugi shows in his books that these peasants and labourers are those who demanded their freedom.

Ngugi creates patriotism in children's brains. Patriotism plays an important role in his stories. *Njamba Nene* uses words like "our country", which means that the child is mature enough to think of his country in terms of 'us' and not 'me'. *Njamba Nene*, we are told, stole bread which he returned again saying: "why have I done what nobody

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else is willing to do? Why have I disobeyed the will of people?" (*Njamba Nene's flying Bus* 7) This is once more a sign of self-criticism, which proves his patriotism.

What impresses us the most in this story is how the narrator puts across the historical situation. This is symptomatic of Ngugi's politics. He tries to explain the Mau Mau mode of revolution as he shows how the boy decided to join the freedom army. The boy is sent with a pistol hidden inside the bread by a disguised Mau Mau general. The invisibility of children in society contributes to revolution. Children became warriors out of necessity; their patriotic role becomes an important response to the need of the society. The message that Ngugi puts across is that we should have respect for children in society; they play a role in politics as much as adults do. Thus, all the virtues mentioned above, except atheism, are present in Ngugi's children books.

Ngugi's ideological sympathies in these books are clearly with the socialist movement. His language, as we have seen, invokes familiar images of a class struggle between poor and rich. This means that the materialistic aspect of Marxist theory is useful for the interpretation of Ngugi's children's books. It seems to us that the history of Ngugi's children's literature, though rooted in Gikuyu culture, bears some similarity to Soviet children's literature or social realist literature.

Ngugi has been a powerful figure in African literature due to his continued emphasis, in his works, on the political function of the writer in postcolonial societies. Marxist critical theory seems to have developed in indigenous African criticism through Ngugi. He shares with Marx common concerns such as class conflict, material production, decolonisation, historiography, etc., stressing the importance of the material conditions of the production and consumption of the text. Marxism was acceptable in his works so long as they were involved in a struggle against the bourgeoisie. Even though Ngugi's literature does that, it is still a fact that his radical theory and Marxism have different emphases.

Indeed, Ngugi as a writer has tried to do somewhat different from other writers of children's literature. Through his stories he intends to make the African children aware of their past glory and the impact of colonialism on the life and culture of African people.

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## Writing Death as a Fantasy: A Study of Charles Kingsley's *The Water Babies*

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Victorian England is generally referred to as the "Golden Age," of Children Literature. As Mary Jackson, puts it, "[there] magically burst forth into view" a new wave of children's literature which differed markedly from previous children's fiction in its use of fantasy, the surreal, the magical and the subversive (253). This is a reading of Victorian children's literature which has wide currency. The "classic" texts of the age, Lewis Carroll's *Alice* books, George Mac Donald's fantasies, *The Water babies* and Edward Lear's nonsense rhymes, among others, are situated as responding to the Romantics, and as opposed to the prescriptive, educative literature which preceded Romanticism. This Victorian Children Literature, in particular, appeared to have been informed by the rational enlightenment thinking of Locke in particular. These texts invite a dialogic sharing of the storytelling process between author and reader, rather than a controlling, authoritative and colonizing relationship. Above all, it is claimed, they respond to the Romantic child and posit an "implied reader who embodies the potential of the Romantic child" with its associated qualities of innocence, purity, joy and innate one-ness with the world (Thacker & Webb 43).

Kingsley, in attempting to write the child after death, find that writing death results in much the same moves as writing the child: either language breaks down and meaning is lost, or death becomes tainted with life and fails as a "pure" representation. The fundamental issue which confronted these texts was - the conflict between the theoretical impossibility of writing the "child" and the unavoidable fact that the child continues to be written. Death and the process of dying, for a narrative, are beyond language. The child death-bed scene is one recurrent in Victorian literature: Dickens, for example, perfected the art of the poignant, heartbreaking child death scene in *The Old Curiosity Shop* and *Dombey and Son*, but the image would also have been recognizable as one derived from the many Victorian "comfort books" which presented highly stylized scenes of dying children released from the world into the care of Heaven, and which were intended as comfort for bereaved parents. More tellingly, Little Emily of David Copperfield is first imagined by the narrator as having died when still a child, implying "it would have been far better for her to die as an innocent child than to live to become a sexually erring woman," and then suffers a textual death, banished from the narrative to Australia (Thornton 145). The preoccupation of these narratives was not so much what occurred after death, since entry to Heaven was assured for the angelic children who populate the comfort book, but how to die a "good" death. The child's death in the comfort book is invariably sweet, pious, transcendental and painless, and is both consolatory and instructive for those left behind.

Charles Kingsley's *The Water Babies*, is set in England, and both use death as the gateway into fantasy. However, the text is doing more than simply using child death as a springboard with varying degrees of awareness; it interrogates the meaning and possibility of writing death itself, in much the same way as the *Alice* texts work to expose the tensions in writing the child. *The Water Babies*, takes an ambivalent stance toward the possibility of knowing what happens after the child dies; the story is understood through a filter of the evolutionary theories of the day and on one level can be read as an account of Tom's "self-evolution" from a beast-like savage to a human

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soul, and rather more nebulously, to "a great man of science" (223). Tom's "evolution" takes place after he is washed out of his body, or drowns, and therefore knowledge has both a scientific and a religious, baptismal sense in this narrative. But this is a narrative jammed with entities, especially adult ones, characterized by ignorance disguised as pseudo-knowledge, and such "facts" as are thrown to the reader are invariably nonsensical or wrong. While the narrative voice appears to make very definite claims to know what happens to Tom and to all children, it is no more trustworthy than the characters it denounces as wrong or misguided. *The Water Babies*, parodies the great nineteenth century scientific debates yet also enacts a debate within itself in which narrative exposes the untrustworthiness of a narrator who declares himself, however jokingly, the possessor of the:

one true,  
orthodox, inductive,  
rational, deductive,  
philosophical, seductive,  
logical, productive,  
irrefragable, salutary,  
nominalistic, comfortable,  
realistic,  
and on-all-accounts-to-be-received  
doctrine of this wonderful fairytale (58).

*The Water Babies*, has a narrative frame and voice that articulates what might lie after death. The question most often posed about this text is that of whether or not Tom, the chimney sweep actually dies. The narrator of *The Water Babies* can be read as nodding towards a second implied reader, an adult who sees through the fantastic account of Tom's "rebirth" or reincarnation as a water baby, and subsequent journey through stages of what might be considered purgatory to a heaven of sorts as a similar device for allegorizing the death of a child.

Professor Ptthmlnsprts is a figure who allows the narrator to satirize some of the scientific beliefs and practices of the day and their reception, particularly the public outcry at Charles Darwin's *Origin of Species*, but also to make a claim about the moral danger of scientific narrow-mindedness. The Professor is well versed in the theories of Darwin, having declared that "apes had hippopotamus majors in their brains just as men have", which, the narrator comments, is a "very wrong and dangerous thing, at which everyone will be very much shocked" as "the one true, certain, final, and all-important difference between you and an ape is, that you have a hippopotamus major in your brain, and it has none" (102, 103). The narrative voice is ironic; he tells the implied child reader that "you may think that there are other more important differences between you and an ape, such as being able to speak, and make machines, and know right from wrong, and say your prayers, and other little matters of that kind; but that is a child's fancy, my dear" (102).

That "child's fancy" is, this heavily satirical tone implies, the correct view to take. Professor Ptthmlnsprts has gone, the narrator continues, I am sorry to say, even further than that, for he had read "a paper, which assured everyone who found himself the better or wiser for the news, that there were not, never had been, and never could be, any rational or half-rational beings except men anywhere, anywhen, or anyhow; that nymphs, satyrs, fauns, inui, dwarfs, trolls, elves, gnomes, fairies" angels, archangels, imps, bogies or worse, were nothing at all, and pure bosh and wind (103). In response



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to his pupil Ellie's wish that there were water babies and mermen, the Professor gives her a "succinct compendium of his famous paper at the British Association, in a form suited for the youthful mind" and eventually, fed up with her persistent questioning of why there are no water babies, "answered quite sharply - "Because there ain't", however no sooner has he done so than he catches Tom the water baby in his collector's net (104).

The Professor, according to the narrator, is given to absolute statements about how the world is ordered and what is and is not possible: in his paper, for instance, he is reported to have said not only that there "were not" any of the following list of creatures, but there "never had been, and never could be," and not only "anywhere" but "anywhen and anyhow." This exhaustive statement is deflated by the very unscientific way in which the Professor sums up his argument and his discussion with Ellie: that such beliefs are "bosh," and that there are no water babies simply "Because there ain't." The narrator confides in the implied child reader that this reply "was not even good English, my dear little boy," colluding in their exclusive knowledge of the Professor's foolishness (104). The reader, however, is only in on this secret because they have been treated to a sort of sermon on the dangers of following the Professor's type of scientific thought too closely. The narrative supplies an interruption from this implied child who objects "But there are no such things as water-babies," to which the narrator responds: "How do you know that? Have you been there to see?...no one has a right to say that no water-babies exist, till they have seen no water-babies existing; which is quite a different thing, mind, from not seeing water-babies" (47).

The narrator has an overt respect for the scientific minds of the day; Huxley, Darwin, Owen and Murchison are among the names of "great men whom good boys are taught to respect" and the narrator declares himself sure they would never make the Professor's mistake of saying "That cannot exist. That is contrary to nature" (48). However, the Professor's "hippopotamus major" is a play on the hippocampus minor, which Owen declared unique to the human brain, thus separating humans from simians, and which Huxley argued was present in simian brains, and thus proved "the impossibility of erecting any cerebral barrier between man and the apes" (Straley 583). That respect is also tempered by a distaste or disapproval on the narrator's part for what he sees as science's tendency to define humanity as mere anatomy (Straley 584). The Professor, on catching Tom, exclaims "what a large pink Holothurian; with hands, too! It must be connected with synapta. ...It actually has eyes!...why it must be a cephalopod!" (105). He falls back on the same ploy used by the doctors who treat his ensuing madness; hiding a failing in his real knowledge ("real" at least within the narrative's definition) with an overwhelming glut of scientific false knowledge. The doctors who treat him diagnose his illness, in "true medical language, one half bad Latin, the other half worse Greek" as "Bumpsterhausen's blue follicles" (109). The list of treatments they prescribe takes up four pages, and includes "Bullyings," "suf fumigations of sulphur," "Pure Bosh," "the Poughkeepsie seer his Prophecies" and "The distilled liquor of addled eggs" (111, 113, 114). None of these succeed, for the Professor's madness has been caused by a fairy who punishes him "because he did not believe in a water-baby when he saw it" by making him believe in worse things" (109). The Professor's sin, and that of all the scientists, is not just that of narrow-mindedness, refusing to see what the world is really like for "fear of spoiling their theories," but of covering up their ignorance with "long words" (108, 109). It is narrated by a voice which takes care to construct itself as adult, to speak down to the child reader in such a way as to imply that the



relationship is one of power in which the narrator not only supplies the narrative, but anticipates the child's responses and can rebut them. "And of course Tom married Ellie!" the implied child exclaims, to which the narrator replies, "My dear child, what a silly notion! Don't you know that no one ever marries in a fairy tale, under the rank of a prince or princess?" (222).

The narrative, therefore, while continually making claims for knowledge, and particularly the claim to know what it is that happens after Tom's "death," must therefore be similarly limited and at a loss to account for what occurs by its very "adulthood." Tom, like Diamond, falls ill, and in a fever, goes down to a stream to bathe. And while the narrator is careful to point out to the implied child reader that the adults were "utterly mistaken," they still "found a black thing in the water, and said it was Tom's body, and that he had been drowned" (53). What really happened, the narrator explains, is that "the fairies had washed him in the swift river, so thoroughly, that not only his dirt, but his whole husk and shell, had been washed quite off him" and Tom had become a water baby (54). This "real Tom" is equated to the notion of a soul when the narrator instructs the reader to "believe the one true" doctrine of this wonderful fairy tale; which is, that your soul makes your body, just as a snail makes his shell" (58).

Tom is therefore able to retain some form of altered existence despite the destruction of his physical self because his soul remains. The process he then undertakes in order to "evolve" from his current status as "a poor little heathen" who is "but a savage now, and like the beasts which perish" is the allegorical journey of a soul towards Heaven, a narrative device which echoes Dante's *Divine Comedy*.

Unlike Dante, however, who travels as a sort of tourist through the regions of Hell, Purgatory and Paradise, Tom must actively evolve, physically and morally, until he is good enough to "go home on Sundays" with Ellie (222). The "going home on Sundays" presents something of a logical issue. Ellie, the little girl who teaches Tom to be better once he has made it to St. Brandan's Isle, home of the water babies, appears to be dead: after falling and hitting her head at the seaside, the fairies came flying in at the window, and brought her such a pretty pair of wings, that she could not help putting them on; and she flew with them out of the window, and over the land, and over the sea, and up through the clouds (108). Tom is eager to know where his new playmate goes on Sundays, but, pressed to explain what it is like, Ellie can tell nothing about the place, except to say that "it was worth all the rest of the world put together" (150). A paradox is operating here, where heaven is beyond language, but death is not. While the text may be producing a proper Christian modesty and humility which makes speculation as to the true nature of heaven blasphemous or at least spiritually arrogant, death, and in Tom's case, purgatory, are seen as distinct from heaven and therefore open to articulation. The problem raised by the acceptability of describing death is that the text has no language to do so except the language of life. This points to the reason for the inability to describe heaven. There is no appropriate language with which to speak about the final and absolute barrier from which there will be no return and which cannot be tainted with life.

Even while Tom, having battled his way to the other-end-of-Nowhere where Mother Carey makes all the species in the world out of seawater and forced his old master Grimes to see the error of his ways, is finally allowed to go home on Sundays with Ellie, he is also simultaneously "quite alive, I am sure you, still" (142). Tom's final



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reward, after going home with Ellie "on Sundays, and sometimes on weekdays, too" is to become "a great man of science" who "knows everything about everything, except why a hen's egg don't turn into a crocodile, and one or two other little things which no one will know till the coming of the cocqgrues" (222). So Tom's reward for successfully evolving his soul from that of a beast to a man and advancing through the stages of purgatory is not to reach heaven, but to receive life. His body mirrors his evolution: whilst a sweep, he is described as resembling "a dead pig," "a black ape," and "a small black gorilla" (9, 21, 23). When he falls into the stream, he thinks "I will be a fish" but is reincarnated as an "eft" (39). From that state he evolves into a water baby, and then finally into a "tall man" (221).

Mother Carey explains near the narrative's start that Tom is "but a savage now, and like the beasts which perish; and from the beasts which perish he must learn" (40). This suggests that Tom, although similar, is not completely bestial, and therefore has the chance of improvement. But it also indicates that death is not his lot, since he is not a beast, who will die. The bestial part of Tom must perish, but he will live. The crossing over into the realm of death is in fact a transition to a better form of living, one which assures life where his past existence as beast-like little boy would have led him to death. Ellie's reward, which is heaven, remains outside the bounds of language, and while Tom is granted a great future by the narrative, what becomes of Ellie is never stated, other than the fact that she doesn't marry Tom. Tom's "death" is described in the terms of life; eventually his death becomes life. Ellie, dying a different death, and existing in a place for which there are no words, disappears from the text.

*The Water Babies* encounters the barrier to accurate representation in its attempt to write death. While the question of whether or not Tom dies or experiences some form of reincarnation is arguably far more ambiguous, the narrative arrives at a position where death or the afterlife is literally unspeakable. The attempt to do so must result in a failure either in language or in authority. The controlling adult narrator of the text undermines his own claims for power and knowledge in a narrative where adults are fundamentally untrustworthy and ignorant, and when Ellie does arrive from "home," the narrator is as silent as she is about the nature of that place. In absence of any other meaningful way to speak about death, the narrative refers back to life in an attempt to create meaning. The child death, whether glorified in the comfort book, or allegorized in the fantasy narrative, occupies a strange position where it is both a common part of Victorian narratives, and a thing which, like the child, cannot be truly written. The narrative attempts a new form of language which might allow the child to represent itself, and ultimately recognize that such a language is incomprehensible. The alternative, in the text, becomes to use the language of life in order to write death. Alice is defined and ordered about by adult ciphers, and demonstrates that the child is understood through the adult. Just as the taint of the sign "adult" cannot be removed from the sign "child," death cannot be written about with referring to life in order to describe it.

*The Water Babies* finds that language can do no more than gesture towards, or approach death, through a variety of strategies. And yet the text is explicitly concerned with what occurs in an afterlife. For death to remain within the text and avoid banishment to the regions beyond language which cannot be shown to exist, it must be described in terms of life, its double. The two sign pairs work as opposites, without which the other cannot be understood, but the gap between each is also collapsed. In



these two texts, the child is the adult, death is life. The child, and its death, are concepts that cannot be imagined or articulated without their polluting opposites, and when the attempt is made, language disappears.

The "return journey" is a common motif of children's fantasy; the child in the text and, vicariously, the child reader, are allowed to adventure into unknown, wild, and potentially dangerous territory and to be returned safely at the narrative's end to a familiar setting. What the trip into a fantastic or unknown world symbolizes, however, or what purpose it serves is difficult to pin down. It is the fact of the "return" to normality which renders this device so ambiguous. *The Water Babies* while using the journey into a fantasy or dream world to very different ends, is emphatic in its insistence that such a process is one from which a return cannot be made. Fantasy is an agent of change. Tom's eventual and highly ambiguous entry into the world is presented as a man of science, a direct result of his moral and physical growth as a water baby, and one far removed from his former life as a chimney-sweep. The return, however, is problematic, since whatever lessons learned or social or psychological concerns are worked out in the fantasy, the child is returned to the reality from which it came: things have not changed. Sarah Gilead, discussing this problem of what to do with the return, wonders:

From the vantage point of the return, is the fantasy a socializing, ego-forming expression of anxieties, fears or grievances? Or is it a stimulus to subversive desires or cognitions and hence a threat to socialization? Does the fantasy plot yield knowledge, consolation, or moral significance and thus fit the concept of children's literature as comforting and educative? Does the frame, as a "safe" container, enable the fantasy to challenge the norms of reality?" (278).

The fantasy framed by departure and return to normality may work in any of these ways. What is consistent, however, is that the fantasy works upon the child who experiences it, and whether they derive growth, understanding, moral awareness or a safety-valve for antisocial desires from the experience, the return is made to a reality that has remained unchanged. In this sense, whether the fantasy journey endorses behaviour that is anarchic or desires which are unsanctioned by society, or puts the protagonist through challenges designed to socialize in the "real" world, the child returning must remain in a reality which is fixed. They may choose to adapt or not, but the world in which they belong will not adapt to fit their transformative experiences. Instead, the return in particular, was a way of allowing the child to covertly escape social norms and pressures, and in doing so, to exist for a limited time in a space unaffected by adult desires and meaning. The "return" actually amplifies the impossibility of achieving this, not merely through the very fact of the return, in which the "real world" has the "last word," as it were, but because, fantasy cannot occur in a space entirely free from adult intervention. Just as the adult is constantly and unshakably present in the language, so the idea of an adult presence is constantly present in the narrative, in the form of a guide or mentor figure. The presence of the adult in the return fantasy sets limits upon to what extent the child can have a truly anarchic and unrestricted experience, since the adult guide constantly explains, limits and instructs how to proceed in worlds that appear initially lawless. Viewed in this way, the return journey into a fantasy becomes a cyclical gesture of the sort that *The Water Babies* and the *Alice* texts practise in language. Instead of being worked out at the linguistic level however, the return is made part of a narrative, and enacts at the level of plot this reaching towards an idea of the child. The return journey, in other words, is an attempt to grasp or articulate this "child" through first setting up a representation



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of the real world, with the associated known social structures, and then striking out from that representation of the real into a representation of fantasy land, which may be governed by rules of its own, but which seems a strange and lawless place. It is in the wild and unsocialized spaces of fantasy that the child's inner life might be explored, and the idea of what a child might do if free from adult rules pondered. However, while this remains a theoretical possibility, what actually happens in the journey into fantasy is quite the opposite. The child is accompanied by adult figures, and while they may be helpful or downright useless, they still signal that it is impossible to imagine a child without a mediating adult.

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## *The Puer Aeternus : Representation of the Child in Tolkien's Legendarium*

Manjistha Basu

It is a striking paradox in all child myths that the "child" is on the one hand delivered helpless into the power of terrible enemies and in continual danger of extinction, while on the other he possesses powers far exceeding those of ordinary humanity. This is closely related to the psychological fact that though the child may be "insignificant," unknown, "a mere child", he is also divine. From the conscious standpoint we seem to be dealing with an insignificant content that has no releasing, let alone redeeming, character. The conscious mind is caught in this conflict-situation, and the combatant forces seem so overwhelming that the "child" as an isolated content bears no relation to the conscious factors.... Myth, however, emphasizes that it is not so, but that the "child" is endowed with superior powers and despite all dangers, will unexpectedly pull through. (*Archetypes* 170)

Tolkien's biographer, Humphrey Carpenter, tells us that Tolkien had intended *The Hobbit* for his children. This little biographical detail will serve a key purpose in understanding certain subtle elements embedded in two of the works to which the author's popularity owes much; namely, *The Hobbit* (1937) and *The Lord of the Rings* (1968). The larger mythic framework which had been preoccupying Tolkien (as he wanted to construct a mythology for England) since prior to the time he had lent his services to the World War I mentions many strange and exotic creatures, save the hobbits. Initially named *The Book of Lost Tales*, this work would be ultimately known as *The Silmarillion*, published posthumously in 1977. The delightful hobbits first come into existence when Tolkien communicates his legendarium to his children.

Tolkien describes the hobbits as:

...a little people, about half our height, and smaller than bearded Dwarves. Hobbits have no beards. There is little or no magic about them, except the ordinary, everyday sort which helps them disappear quietly and quickly when large stupid folk like you and me come blundering along, making a noise like elephants which they can hear a mile off. They are inclined to be fat in the stomach; they dress in bright colours (chiefly green and yellow); wear no shoes, because their feet grow natural leathery soles and thick warm brown hair like stuff on their heads (which is curly); have long clever brown fingers, good-natured faces, and deep fruity laughs (especially after dinner, which they have twice a day when they can get it). (*The Hobbit* 4)

The hobbits are almost a metaphor for the little children Tolkien was narrating this tale for. They are 'little people' with keen senses of hearing and sight, with 'good-natured faces, and deep fruity laughs.' They are also beardless. All these are distinct attributes of a child, inclusive of their love for bright colours. With minor alterations Tolkien renders them as mythical beings, but draws them as beings that are closer to nature. He specifically says they do not possess any magic. The hobbits enjoy eternal childhood. It is from amidst such creatures that Tolkien chooses his hero. The vulnerability of such a tiny creature in a dangerous quest is terrifying. But Tolkien's mythic tale imparts enormous significance on these seemingly powerless creatures who will finally rescue the situation and restore harmony and order by undergoing life-threatening trials.

In fact when the Ent, Treebeard, meets Merry and Pippin, he cannot quite recognise what creatures they are. Helpfully the two offer that they are hobbits - "Half-grown

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hobbits, the hole-dwellers." (*Lord of the Rings* 454) they say. They ask Treebeard to put the hobbits next to "Man (the Big People)" (*Lord of the Rings* 454). Their request invites a comparative paradigm, where man is 'big' and they are 'small,' like children who are miniatures of the adults. But we will come to this eventually.

To know the hobbit we must first meet Bilbo Baggins, the titular character of *The Hobbit*. Bilbo is not only a hero; he is the archetypal *puer aeternus* (*Archetypes* 158) - the eternal child - whose adventurous quest to retrieve the stolen dwarves' hoard from the menacing dragon, Smaug, can be read as an enlightening journey of the soul. The physical appearance of Tolkien's hobbits bring them closer to the *puer aeternus* for they have the stature of early adolescents, viewing the world with curious eyes, wary of larger men and with keen senses which often lead them into much trouble. Also the hobbits enjoy an extensive period of youth where at about the age of thirty in human years one 'comes of age'. Bilbo's entire perilous quest can be graphed as a learning curve, and Bilbo's actions are always laced with a hint of child-like simplicity while his decisions are often born out of pubescent desperation as he confronts problems with an innocent gusto, unaffected by greed or experience. In Tolkien's mythic narrative one can see how the *puer aeternus* manifests and evolves through his experiences with other significant mythic archetypes. It will be wise to mention here that Bilbo is not the only eternal child archetype in Tolkien's legendarium; in *The Lord of the Rings* we will meet Frodo, Bilbo's nephew. Accompanied by his hobbit companions - Merry, Pippin and Sam - Frodo will go on another mission to demolish Sauron's evil rule which is metaphorically represented by the One Ring.

The narrative of *The Hobbit* begins with Bilbo's quiet, pleasant life at Bag End being intruded upon, first by Gandalf, who informs him that he will meet him the following day to discuss certain plans. The next day, Gandalf does appear, but thirteen dwarves precede him and this in itself implies that Bilbo's quest is also a test, for in the process the reader gets to know how Bilbo copes with unfamiliar, unexpected situations which will constantly challenge him through the length of the quest. At the same time there is a clear indication that Gandalf will be involved in the fate of the quest, and perhaps much of it is his doing. Bilbo is bewildered at the arrival of the strange dwarves and is quite at his wit's end. Gandalf's association with Bilbo is significant. In the Jungian scheme of mythic archetypes Gandalf typifies the Spirit (numen), and according to Jung, the numen is "a supra-individual factor" (*Four Archetypes* 147). Jung further qualifies the Spirit as the Wise Old Man who is a 'personification of the spiritual principle' (*Critical Approaches to Literature* 188). Gandalf is wise, well-versed in wizardry and his mission is to save the creation and the creatures at any cost, which primarily involves destruction of the hostile forces. His accomplishments also include magic. He is a literal and spiritual guide for the hobbits and other characters who appear in Tolkien's legendarium. Bilbo's journey from Bag End with his thirteen dwarf companions, who seek to reclaim their stolen treasure, doubles as his spiritual quest as he ventures forth from his hobbit-hole (a symbolic womb from whence he begins his life's mission) to gain a greater treasure - the power of renunciation. Bilbo ultimately will renounce his part of the hoard and the prized Arkenstone (a trophy for the dwarves) to win peace at a critical, testing moment. It is Bilbo again, who will chance upon the One Ring, thereby unknowingly grasping the strands of the narrative in his hands which began much before him and will continue much after. It is this Ring, the deadliest creation of Sauron, the prime archetypal Shadow (dark aspect and the never seen lord of the rings) in Tolkien's narrative, who has devised the Ring to control Middle Earth. What Bilbo begins will end with Frodo.

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After a series of puzzling events, Bilbo joins the dwarves on a quest for retrieving their long-lost gold, which at the beginning of the tale is in the possession of the dreadful dragon, Smaug. The adventure is perilous, with Smaug epitomising the ultimate evil challenge in *The Hobbit*. The path they take to make their quest successful is riddled with evil, dark and unknown forces. Bilbo is 'tested' right from the very beginning of the quest - the first test being their encounter with the trolls. The encounter with the trolls leads the company into the first cave of the expedition. Jung says of the cave - 'The cave is the place of rebirth... in which... one is renewed' (*Four Archetypes* 81). The cave is one of the many symbols which Jung catalogues under the mother archetype. He says the mother archetype appears under an infinite variety of aspects. According to him things which arouse feelings of awe and devotion, as for instance church, city, university, the woods, the sea, the cave - can all be interpreted as mother-symbols. These symbols, according to Jung:

... can have a positive, favourable meaning or a negative, evil meaning.... Evil symbols are the witch, the dragon (or any other devouring and entwining animal, such as a large fish or a serpent), the grave, the sarcophagus, deep water, death, nightmares and bogies.... This list is not, of course, complete; it presents only the most important features of the mother archetype. (*Four Archetypes* 15)

Indeed, Bilbo's reinvention of himself begins from a cave. It is in the cave that Bilbo is endowed with his weapon, Sting. In fact, the cave motif is reiterated through the entire tale, appearing again in the tumultuous climax of *The Hobbit* and resurfaces again in *The Lord of the Rings*. Jung posits that the cave motif is an extension of the mother image in its encompassing, womb-like structure. In Tolkien's tales the cave usually encloses something terrifying and potentially life-threatening (Shadow) which stands as a guard to the precious possessions inside the cave. But the evil occupier of the cave is finally ousted and destroyed, and the prize is attained through a process of testing. This pattern has been previously seen in the Icelandic myths and *Beowulf* where the evil occupier of the cave is dealt with and destroyed by the hero before he can access the prized possessions within the cave. The cave is thus transformed from the terrible mother type through the trial of the heroic character and becomes the rewarding mother. The trolls stayed in a cave from which the company gained many useful weapons which saved their lives often along their perilous route. The second instance of the cave is the habitat of Smaug on the mountain. Smaug guards the treasure hoard which rightfully belonged to the dwarves. The company of dwarves had set out on the quest in an attempt to rescue that particular hoard. Each time the company enters a cave, they are rewarded but not before they face a rigorous test. The reward in each instance is guarded by a terrible force, which increases progressively. The waxing terror indicates the increasing value of the reward - when the danger is greater, the prize is dearer. The Jungian insight into the cave motif, recurrent in myths, reveal the analogy between the womb and the cave - the womb too brings forth the most precious gift of life, while the cave provides things which ensure their progress and enrichment. Bilbo gets the Ring from Gollum who has come to possess it through dark means (stealth and murder). Gollum is a corrupt hobbit, as we learn later. He is the Trickster figure and Jung explains the Trickster as an extension of the Shadow who is,

... represented by counter-tendencies in the unconscious<sup>1</sup>, and in certain cases by a sort of second personality, of a puerile and inferior character, not unlike the personalities who announce themselves at spiritualistic séances and cause all those ineffably childish phenomena so typical of poltergeists. I have, I think, found a



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suitable designation for this character-component when I call it the shadow (Four Archetypes 168).

Gollum has 'a sort of second personality.' He addresses the Ring as 'precious' and while talking to himself in the dark cavern mostly uses the first person plural 'we'. He seeks refuge in tricking Bilbo to get a bit of a tasty morsel (which, in fact is Bilbo!) for Gollum has had nothing else but fish to eat for a very long time. Jung locates the trickster figure at the transitional phase of consciousness between animal and human. Gollum eats raw fish and contemplates Bilbo as a potential meal. Bilbo succeeds in beating Gollum at the game of riddles, and in turn gets the Ring. If Bilbo is the good hobbit, an eternal child who serves a higher purpose, then Gollum is the bad hobbit who perverts the plan and plays truant. Both however, remain integrally significant for the unraveling of the scheme of events. As Bilbo and Frodo will eternally respond to Gandalf's call, Gollum will eternally respond to Sauron's ominous beckoning. Split into the eternal polarity of good and evil, the narrative will evoke the scope of 'enantiodromia' which Jung describes as the

...characteristic phenomenon [which] practically always occurs when an extreme, one-sided tendency dominates conscious life; in time an equally powerful counterposition is built up, which first inhibits the conscious performance and subsequently breaks through the conscious control. (Websource 26.10.2011)

In this scheme - the Shadow is the darker aspect of the Self - Gollum will first be Bilbo's Shadow aspect, and then Frodo's - thereby sustaining the enantiodromic balance which acts as a governing force for the entire narrative. At a subterranean level the presence of Gollum hints at the corrupt possibilities lurking in the child archetype.

Gandalf's Christ image (his tendency to lead and preserve, his ability to sacrifice himself for saving others and his eventual resurrection) as also his association with elves such as Galadriel and Legolas, who put their faith in him, clearly signal he is aligned with the benign force of Iluvatar while Sauron, Melkor's vassal, in selecting Melkor (the outcast rebel who rose against Iluvatar and is cast into the dark thereof and whose only purpose is to destroy all that Iluvatar creates) is aligned with the nether force and these are the two determining forces which rule the voice of the narrative. Pitted against these phenomenal forces Bilbo will continue his quest and emerge victorious. Smaug finds his ancestry in Glaurung, the vile dragon in *The Silmarillion* who had served the purpose of the dark agents. Smaug jealously guards the stolen loot which includes the dwarves' long-lost treasures, including the treasured Arkenstone.

Bilbo's mettle is repeatedly tested through the entire quest. The first testing occurs when he encounters the goblins in their lair, after the company's encounter with the trolls. It is during this terrifying phase, that Bilbo also has a chance encounter with Gollum and defeats him in a game of riddles, coming in possession of the powerful, magical Ring. Bilbo emerges from the underground den empowered by the magic Ring. Bilbo realises the Ring renders him the power of being invisible, and uses this power later to free his dwarf friends from the spiders. Bilbo's strength enhances with the two perilous but enriching trials, once when he comes in possession of his weapon Sting, and the next time when he wins the magic Ring. The incident where the dwarves are entrapped in cocoon-like cases anticipates some kind of transformation and indeed there are proofs of such. Thorin, who is the leader of the dwarf company, is forgotten and is thus the last to be rescued. He looks quite dead on being released from his

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confinement. He recovers but as the tale draws to an end, he is transformed from a common dwarf to an immortal one by his physical death. Thorin and his company of dwarves knew from the instant they set out on the quest that their lives were endangered. When Thorin and the company of twelve dwarves, accompanied by Bilbo set out on their quest, they are yet to learn that this quest would lead them to the treasured Arkenstone. They simply set out to retrieve their hoard of treasure which has been wrongly possessed by the menacing dragon, Smaug. Their quest progresses with interruptions, which come as testing instances for the entire company. Thorin's trial is to retrieve the dwarf treasure from the very start though Bilbo's inclusion in this trial has ramifications beyond this. The experiences they gather along the way are instrumental in bringing them closer, increasing the sense of bonhomie the group shares. Though Bilbo does not physically slay Smaug, he is instrumental in its killing. It is Bilbo, who first spies upon the soft spot in Smaug's infallible armour when he ventures into the dragon's lair for the second time and holds a long parley with him. Smaug proudly displays his armour, and while doing so, Bilbo spots the tender, unprotected patch in the hollow of his left breast. An old thrush, who is also Bard's messenger, learns of the dragon's vulnerability, when Bilbo discloses this defect to his dwarf companions. In time, Bard and his allies make good use of this knowledge and kill the dragon.

As we follow the plot of the story, we realise that the entire journey to the Lonely Mountains is like an extended exposition and each episode plays a fundamental role in introducing characters who are all seen in the climactic battle of the five armies. Those who had offered succour and shelter to the dwarves and Bilbo along their perilous journey join forces with them in the great battle. Even the king of wood-elves, who had held the dwarves captive, fight on their side. It maybe recalled here that though they held the dwarves captive, they did not deny them their victuals. The initial conflict was about the spoils of Smaug's treasure which was held by the dwarves and the claim that Bard made to Thorin, asking for a share for slaying the evil worm. Bard is joined by the king of the wood-elves and his army. Thorin stubbornly holds his ground, refusing to let the men have a share in the prize. He sends word through the ravens to his cousins and fellow-dwarves of the Iron Mountains and knows that they will be coming to his aid and thus is not hesitant to fight Bard's army to ensure sole possession over the reward. As the men and the dwarves quibble over the prize, Bilbo sneaks out into the night to buy peace with the Men by offering them the Arkenstone and his share of the booty. This is the moment of Bilbo's renunciation as he rises above the Self, for a greater good. The entire dynamics starts to alter when the Wargs and the goblins are announced. The dwarves and the elves put aside their ancient differences and come to fight as one. The army of men also sides with them. Later the Eagles and Beorn (the shape-shifting man-beast capable of being terrifying and reassuring at the same time) too join the battle, inflicting a crushing defeat on the evil creatures. Beorn's furious involvement in the battle can be seen as a kind of 'Animal battle frenzy - a type of demonic possession involving an animal form and/ or beastly ferocity - is the hallmark of the Odinic warrior, the fury of whom is most regularly associated with that of wolves and bears' (*Gods, Heroes and Kings* 20-21). The entire expedition can also be seen as a venture to vanquish evil. Strategically, as the company proceeds, it encounters evil and either demolishes it on the spot, (as in the case of the trolls) or brings them down in the final battle. The spiders are the only ones who are not destroyed in a great mass, but the elves despise them, and tackle them ruthlessly at all times.



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Bilbo is vital in forwarding the action and he is especially chosen by Gandalf to participate in this great quest. Gandalf is a great wizard who has a keen, deep and clear understanding of people and their abilities. He is aware of the nature of the dwarves' quest, and knows they will need a nimble, witty comrade to succeed. He deems Bilbo fit for this task. He faces threats which are his tests and he overcomes them at times with magical aid (helpers) while at other times he survives by his own wits. The first of such aid is offered by the elf king Elrond followed by the great Eagles who come to help the company in their adversity against the goblins and the Wargs. The last of such aids is the shape-shifting Beorn.

Frodo as Bilbo's heir is again the prototype of the *puer aeternus*, the child hero or 'homunculi' who, as Bilbo before him, is the chosen one, and like his predecessor he too succeeds when all the odds are seemingly against him. Like *The Hobbit*, *The Lord of the Rings* ends on a hopeful note, if only with a more complete destruction of evil.

Tolkien's alternate fantasy (fairy) world harbours a kinship with Jung's concept of the collective unconscious, proclaiming both these worlds as universal, yet beyond the domain of easy accessibility, defined with depth and richness.

Frodo's Shire, safely ensconced by the woods, far removed from the numinous world, records the appearance of strange creatures in the woods. These creatures include the elves, the dwarves and Tree-men (Ents) prying open a considerable section of Tolkien's world of fairy. Woods and forests are symbolic of the collective unconscious according to Jungian interpretation, thus paralleling Tolkien's fairy world with the collective unconscious. Jung describes the collective unconscious in relation to the personal unconscious which, according to him is 'superficial' in comparison, for the collective unconscious has a 'universal' nature. He clarifies his stance by saying:

A more or less superficial layer of the unconscious is undoubtedly personal. I call it the personal unconscious. But this personal unconscious rests upon a much deeper layer, which does not derive from personal acquisition but is inborn. This deeper layer I call the collective unconscious. I have chosen the term "collective" because this part of the unconscious is not individual but universal; in contrast to the personal psyche, it has contents and modes of behaviour that are more or less the same everywhere and in all individuals. It is, in other words, identical in all men and thus constitutes a common psychic substrate of a suprapersonal nature which is present in every one of us. (*Archetypes* 3-4)

In his essay 'On Fairy-Stories' Tolkien says:

The realm of fairy-story is wide and deep and high and filled with many things: all manner of beasts and birds are found there; shoreless seas and stars uncounted; beauty that is an enchantment, and an ever-present peril; both joy and sorrow as sharp as swords. In that realm a man may, perhaps, count himself fortunate to have wandered, but its very richness and strangeness tie the tongue of a traveller who would report them. And while he is there it is dangerous for him to ask too many questions, lest the gates should be shut and the keys be lost. (*Monsters and Critics* 109)

Tolkien's perception of the fairy world harbours a kinship with Jung's concept of the collective unconscious, proclaiming both these worlds as universal, yet beyond the domain of easy accessibility, defined with depth and richness. As the collective unconscious manifests itself through common modes of behaviour and contents (that which comprises it) of the cultural memory, the fairy world manifests itself through a common understanding of its existence, followed by a denial of the acceptance of its



existence. Both the fairy world and the collective unconscious are intangible. When this connection between Tolkien's fairy world and the collective unconscious is established, it leads to an instance where we can perceive the Shire as the realm of consciousness.

Frodo's journey commences from the Shire and he gradually wades deeper into the numinous realm. This progression parallels the journey from the state of consciousness into the world of collective unconscious. Jung unravels the collective unconscious as part harmless, part terrifying and at times absolutely passive. The co-existence of fair and foul to produce harmony in their ultimate synthesis features throughout Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*. Originally planned as a direct sequel to *The Hobbit*, *The Lord of the Rings* matures into a work which has a sombre, serious note with graver implications. The later work seems to address an older audience. The narrative runs a gamut of emotions and sensations from comic to epic, homely to monstrous and diabolic. This *magnum opus* has been referred to as an 'epic novel' and Tolkien's efforts have been considered as an attempt to create a new mythology for England. It is true that his endeavour has been lauded and it has been universally accepted that he succeeds in creating a mythology for England and there has been some speculation to see how this has been achieved. Critics have at times used the Jungian premise to identify the various archetypal ideas present in his works, but these elements are consistent in most myths. What is important is to note how Tolkien uses indigenous material, identifies certain set patterns and effectively composes an apparently new mythology. The Jungian premise enhances the appreciation born of identifying the native mythic pulse which had been subverted by later influences on England.

The narrative does not waste any time in exploiting the curious contrast between potential of the evil Ring against the idyllic, innocent backdrop of the Shire and its inhabitants. Tolkien uses geographical relief to translate the progression of the mission into a murky, misty world of ominous evil. The hills turn to mountains, scaling the growth in heroic aspirations and maturation of the soul, while the water bodies become unclear and dangerous, their murkiness signifying the progression of the narrative into dangerous realms. The elevation of the mountains' peaks raise the expectations of the reader, anticipating a growth in Frodo's spiritual stature and wisdom since he first began his journey at Bag End. The topographical relief features are wisely used by the narrator to convey a sense of impending doom. These features become more threatening to create an imagery which directly indicates the escalating danger and the impossibility of the mission. Tolkien introduces the evil presence in the very first chapter of *The Lord of the Rings*, exploiting the backdrop of the innocent, idyllic Shire to an advantage for heightening the sense of awful contrast. The initial pleasant environment heralds ominous times.

The second chapter of *The Lord of the Rings* is suggestively named 'Shadows of the Past.' This chapter enjoys deserved importance for it serves as a continuation of the exposition, discussing the terrible forces that the chosen one, Frodo, will soon have to encounter. The narrative concentrates in unraveling the course of action, creating a sense of urgency in the plot. The enantiodromic counter-tendencies run as a strong undercurrent in Tolkien's legendarium. Jung explains enantiodromia as a 'rhythm of negative and positive, loss and gain, dark and light' (*Archetypes* 38). Each character has its evil counterpart: Gandalf has Saruman, Frodo has Gollum, Galadriel has Shelob, the human heroes (Aragorn, Theoden, Eomar, Faramir) have the faceless, dehumanized Ringwraiths, the elves have the orcs, the Ents have the trolls, the white horses have the black horses and the Eagles have the winged steeds of Sauron.

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As the narrative progresses, the association between Frodo and Gollum increases at a disturbing pace. To understand the bond between Frodo and Gollum we could use Jung's perception of the Shadow:

The shadow is a living part of the personality and therefore wants to live with it in some form. It cannot be argued out of existence or rationalized into harmlessness.... The meeting with oneself is, at first, the meeting with one's own shadow. The shadow is a tight passage, a narrow door, whose painful constriction no one is spared who goes down to the deep well. But one must learn to know oneself in order to know who one is. For what comes after the door is, surprisingly enough, a boundless expanse full of unprecedented uncertainty, with apparently... no mine and no thine, no good and no bad.... It is the world... where I experience the other in myself and the other-than-myself experiences me. (*Archetypes* 20-22)

Gollum guides Frodo for a consistent part of his quest, and the ambiguity of the Shadow archetype is best brought out by the fact that without his guidance the quest is impossible. Yet he is always treated as potential danger nonetheless. Gollum's withered form is a constant warning to Frodo, requiring Frodo to never succumb to the temptation of the Ring for the desired completion of the quest. Frodo and his Shadow coexist till the point where Frodo destroys the other.

Frodo's split with his Shadow occurs at a climactic position in the narrative and we can observe this as Frodo's transformation, which occurs at a crucial time for him. This transformation is demystified by Jung as a process of rebirth, which

... is not a process that we can in any way observe. We can neither measure nor weigh nor photograph it. We have to do here with a purely psychic reality.... It is entirely beyond sense perception.... One speaks of rebirth; one professes rebirth; one is filled with rebirth.... We have to be content with its psychic reality. (*Four Archetypes* 63-64)

There comes a point in the tale when Gollum succeeds in creating a rift between Frodo and Sam to achieve his vicious scheme of getting the Ring back. Frodo starts relying on Gollum, as he believes Gollum to be a fellow sufferer who has borne the burden of the Ring. His empathy for Gollum reaches a point where he can no longer trust Sam. This misplaced trust ultimately endangers their lives when Gollum betrays Frodo and Sam at the lair of the murderous spider, Shelob. Entrapped by the unrelenting webs spun by Shelob, Frodo and Sam struggle hard to leave the labyrinthine abode of the monstrous spider. Shelob injects Frodo with a fatal dose of her poison and Frodo falls into a death-like stupor. Sam believes he has lost his master and relieves him of all his burdens inclusive of the Ring. Soon some orcs appear on the scene, and Sam is forced to abandon the body of his master. Well-hidden from the orcs, Sam learns from them that Frodo is still alive. Sam rescues Frodo after a difficult strife with the orcs at the tower of Cirith Ungol. Shelob had spun a net around Frodo, as if spinning a cocoon-like web around him, an encasing from which he will emerge. The hobbits enter Shelob's lair which resembles a cavern in many ways and has a maze-like quality about it. Jung typecasts caves and cave-like structures as a place suited for rebirth. He cites the example of Khidr from the Koran, who is born in a cave in darkness, and continuously renews himself in it (*Four Archetypes* 88). Frodo's renewal sunders Gollum from him, cementing the bond between Sam and Frodo. Jung discusses the process of *renovatio* while explaining the various forms of rebirth and significantly points out that 'Rebirth may be a renewal without any change of being, inasmuch the personality which is renewed is not changed in its essential nature, but only its functions, or parts



of the personality, are subjected to healing, strengthening, or improvement' (Four Archetypes 55).

Manjistha Basu  
(Four Archetypes 55).

Since the time Frodo receives the Ring he increasingly becomes possessed by it. His personality does not enlarge or become diminutive, but undergoes what Jung would call a structural alteration. His gradual conviction that the Ring belongs to him leads him to the point where his mind starts to play tricks with him. Jung says: 'One has to be an especially good friend of the possessed person and willing to put up with almost anything if one is to attempt to deal with such a situation' (Four Archetypes 64). Sam is this 'good friend,' who puts up with everything that Frodo does since receiving the Ring, culminating in the fatal encounter with Shelob. After the renewal, Frodo's personality undergoes a subtle change, creating the much-wanted separation with Gollum, thus bringing a clean rift between the evil shadow and the self. Also, Frodo still continues the task for which he was chosen. As Maud Bodkin points out, the suffering experienced when the protagonist undertakes a journey through Hades, leads him to rebirth. This is true for Frodo, for what he has undergone at Shelob's lair is nothing short of the epical underworld, and as Gandalf before him, Frodo lies bare-bodied and vulnerable when Sam rescues him.

Tolkien critics like Patrick Grant have pointed out how the prominent characters in *The Lord of the Rings* have dual aspects, doubled by their shadow archetypes. However, a third aspect exists in the case Frodo. While clarifying the aspects of the shadow, Jung says,

If it has been believed hitherto that the human shadow was the source of all evil, it can now be ascertained on closer investigation that the unconscious man, that is, his shadow, does not consist only of morally reprehensible tendencies, but also displays a number of good qualities, such as normal instincts, appropriate reactions, realistic insights, creative impulses, etc. (Websource 26.10.2011)

While the more terrifying aspect of the shadow exists for Frodo in Gollum - there is a continuation of the 'good qualities', which exist as an extension. This calmer, controlled, productive aspect of the shadow has been brilliantly essayed by Tolkien in creating a soothing counterpart for Frodo in Sam who has the above mentioned qualities. The qualities mentioned by Jung which contribute to the milder, beneficiary nature of the Shadow as 'normal instincts, appropriate reactions, realistic insights, creative impulses, etc.' relates smoothly to Sam as he quietly serves his master, Frodo. The 'creative impulses' are best exemplified in Sam. He returns from the quest, with some magic dust from Lady Galadriel to aid him in his gardening. His love for gardening has been made prominent through the narrative of the tale. He waits with avid anticipation and is overjoyed when the dust brings the flora to heavy fruition. Sam also portrays the normal instincts of the shadow in his desire to marry and settle down with wife and child. This tripartite mode (Frodo - Gollum - Sam) helps the reader to understand the fine nuances of Tolkien's creative imagination. The characters representing the normal tendencies of the shadow do not lack in dedication or heroism and in fact, they serve as relief to the major characters. Despite Sam's return to a regular livelihood by marrying and having children, he will finally follow Frodo and depart for the Grey Havens soon after Frodo's departure. Sam, like Frodo, is a Ring-bearer, though for a very brief period of time. None of the Ring bearers (including Gollum) remain on Middle Earth as the tale ends. Whereas the dark extension of the shadow is heartless, sly and deceptive - the preserving part of the shadow is soothing,



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supportive and protective. While Gollum is corrupted by his lust for the evil Ring, Sam is exalted by his fealty.

The completion of Frodo's quest (which had actually begun with Bilbo) ensures the ringing of wedding bells and the restoration of order. Aragorn (the king in the last book of *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy; *The Return of the King*) returns to his rightful position of kingship, forfeiting his previous position as a king without a kingdom. The journey ends with Aragorn's union with his soul mate Arwen. Arwen is Elrond's daughter and an elf-maid. She renounces her elven position to win a mortal life to continue her existence with Aragorn. As the narrative draws to an end, we have the elves departing for the Grey Havens - a sanctuary where the care-worn retire after living a life of long, heroic strife. The last trace of evil is wiped out by the destruction of the evil wizard Saruman - brought to a pitiable end by his own monster Grima Wormtongue, who is in turn immediately shot to death by the hobbits who witness the gruesome incident. Now the numinous world is absolutely dissolved. Gandalf leaves and so does Frodo, thereby nullifying the magical and the nether powers. It is explained by Jung that the two forces are interdependent, and one validates and creates the necessity for the other. The Jungian theory of enantiodromia - the rhythm of negative and positive - ceases to exist and in its place there is the promised continuum of harmony. The most active segment of the narrative spans across the time frame of a year. The seasons turn, essaying the changes that come along with them. After much loss there is hope and new beginnings as strife-worn heroes Aragorn, Faramir and Sam unite with their loves. Galadriel's gift brings back to life the lush flora of the Shire. The beginning signals an entry into the dangerous realm of the collective unconscious and after the experience one emerges wiser, returning to the world of consciousness where things are as we know them. The entire scope of this experience is best captured in Frodo's memoirs of this mythic adventure titled: 'The Downfall of the Lord of the Rings and the Return of the King' (*The Lord of the Rings* 1004).

With the addition of the hobbits Tolkien enhances the exotic allure of his legendarium. It is made more comprehensive, and by addressing the hobbits as 'little people' Tolkien immediately creates a connection between man and hobbit. Jung qualifies childlike or small creatures as the potential *puer aeternus*. The hobbits are not discussed in *The Silmarillion*. Unlike the elves and men, the children of Iluvatar, who were also known as the Firstborn and the Followers respectively, and enjoy a detailed genealogy in 'The Coming of the Elves and the Captivity of Melkor' and 'Of Men,' the hobbits do not have a genealogy. Neither are they created by the scheme of the benign Valar Aule as the dwarves were in 'Of Aule and Yavanna.' The lack of clarity in their origin imparts an aura of mystery to their beings and by comparing them to the other creatures in his work he succeeds in making the hobbits rather believable, reducing their remoteness. It is, as if, Tolkien preserves a bit of the integral essences of the other creatures in his mythology in the hobbits. The endearing aspects of the other creatures in Tolkien's legendarium are integrated into their beings. The obscurity of the hobbit is retained in Gandalf's words when he says,

... as far as I know there is no Power in the world that knows all about hobbits. Among the Wise I am the only one that goes for hobbit-lore: an obscure branch of knowledge, but full of surprises. Soft as butter they can be, and yet sometimes as tough as old tree-roots. I think some would resist the Rings far longer than most of the Wise would. (*The Lord of the Rings* 53)

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The hobbits are described in relation to dwarves and men and enjoy a prominent position in Tolkien's mythology. They provide the connection between a simple child's fantasy and a deeper, more intricate fabric of Tolkien's creative mythology. According to Tolkien, 'As the high Legends of the beginning are supposed to look at things through Elvish minds, so the middle tale of the Hobbit takes a virtually human point of view - and the last tale blends them' (*The Silmarillion* xv). As Bilbo and Frodo return home after completing full circles (their quests begin from and end at Bag End, though Frodo and Bilbo ultimately depart for the Grey Havens) we are familiarised with the surprising strength, vitality and deceptive, yet endearing simplicity of a hobbit with a loyal heart who can manage to put evil to good uses and is thus 'endowed with superior powers and despite all dangers, will unexpectedly pull through' (*Archetypes* 170).

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## The Realistic Animal Story in Canadian Children's Literature

Nandita Mohapatra

In the late nineteenth century, the Realistic Animal Story emerged as a genuine native product of Canada. Combining elements of Nature writing and animal fiction, it can be best defined as 'animal biography' in fictional form. Traditional forms of animal stories written for children were generally responses of the authors to animals and therefore were highly anthropomorphized and fantastic. Animals in these narratives were used for human ends: they could talk, they dressed in human clothing and enacted their roles in a hierarchical society. Books like Rudyard Kipling's *The Jungle Book* (1894-95) and Kenneth Grahame's *The Wind in the Willows* (1907) are typical examples of such narratives. In many ways, it was the publication of Anna Sewell's *Black Beauty* (1877) which created a market for this genre. *Black Beauty* spoke as a human and his message was an appeal for the humane treatment of domesticated animals. *Black Beauty* was followed in 1894 by the Canadian writer Marshall Saunders' *Beautiful Joe* (1894) which further stimulated public interest in animal welfare. These stories were highly moralistic animal stories produced on the assumption that faults and virtues would be made clearer to children if they were attributed to animals.

The fabulist mode of these traditional animal stories, however, saw a dramatic change in the birth and development of the Realistic Animal Story by two Canadians, Ernest Thompson Seton and Charles G.D. Roberts whose works gave it its definition and its highest form. Both were naturalists, Seton from Ontario and Roberts from Brunswick, and both wrote on the Canadian wilderness out of sheer love and interest for wild animals. They were interested in their animal subjects as animals, not devices, and they sought to correct the image of animals chained to blind instinct, an idea made all the stronger with the impact of Darwinism in the latter part of the nineteenth century. Seton and Roberts used the animal story not only to portray animal personality and behaviour but also to explore the mysteries of the natural order and man's place within it.

Seton and Roberts tried to create animal biographies by introducing a rigorous naturalism to their writings. At the same time they were equally conscious not to anthropomorphise animals. Their animal characters are not led by blind instinct but they are creatures who possess, to a considerable extent, the faculty of reason and there is an unmistakable emphasis on their personality and individuality. As Roberts puts it in *The Animal Story*: "It is with the psychology of animal life that the representative animal stories of today are first of all concerned.....The animal story at its highest point of development is a psychological romance constructed on a framework of natural science" (364-65). The plots are chiefly struggles for survival in a hostile environment where, more often than not, the animals fall to the laws of Nature and man is usually the victor. Seton puts it thus, "the life of a wild animal *always has a tragic end*." (*Seton, Lives of the Hunted*, 9) Roberts expresses it more poetically when he says, "And death stalks joy forever among the kindred of the wild". (*The Kindred of the Wild* (1902). Both



writers preferred the short story form and the novella so as to avoid monotony and to have a greater dramatic impact, which only the short story can provide.

It is significant that both these authors, born in the same year, 1860, burst on the literary scene in the heat of the debate over Darwinism, the greatest intellectual problem facing the Western civilization in the nineteenth century. It threatened man's hitherto beliefs in the natural order, harmony and purpose of God's creations and stressed, instead, on the struggle for existence in a world which was chaotic, purposeless and ruled by force. John Sandlos rightfully comments that the emergence of "the animal story as a genre reflects an ideological response to the debate regarding man's relationship to the natural world and animals, more specifically, in response to an increase in scientific knowledge of animal and human nature following the impetus of Darwinism." (73-91). Robert H. McDonald seems to agree with Sandlos when he says: " (the animal stories are) part of a popular revolt against Darwinian determinism, and is an affirmation of man's need for moral and spiritual values..... The works of Seton and Roberts are thus celebrations of rational, ethical animals, who, as they rise above instinct, reach towards the spiritual....." (18-29).

Seton and Roberts tried to interpret evolution in ways that would emphasize law and purpose in Nature. By projecting animals as thinking and feeling beings whose deaths were purposeful, they made it easier for people to accept evolutionary theory without losing faith in God. Thomas Dunlap very insightfully observes that their stories helped people not to reject Darwinism but to assimilate it. Roberts' stories, for example, showed that humans and wild animals shared the common tasks of feeding, protecting and raising their young. They had similar emotional and mental lives. His classic story "Do Seek their Meat from God" (included in his book *Earth's Enigmas* (1896), for example, tells the story of a woodsman who finds his child being stalked by mountain lions. He kills the cats, thus saving his child. But, in an ironical twist, the story tells of the lion's cubs later being found dead from starvation. The woodsman and the lion pair, Roberts shows, were engaged in a common struggle to ensure the survival of their offspring. Seton expounded on the same theme in his introduction to *Wild Animals I Have Known*, where he suggests man's affinity with animals and animals' ability to escape the confines of mere instinct: ".....we and the beasts are kin. Man has nothing that animals have not some least a vestige of, the animals have nothing that man does not in some degree share." (*Wild Animals* 11-12)

In their bid not to anthropomorphise their animals, the two writers repeatedly attested to their faithfulness to Nature and natural history. Nevertheless, in 1903, the Dean of American nature writers, John Burroughs, launched a scathing attack on what he called "sham naturalists". He alleged that many nature writers including Seton, Roberts, Long and London, were fake writers because of their over-dramatization of animal life. This started the Nature Faker controversy which came to an end after four years when President Theodore Roosevelt took the side of Burroughs and condemned what he called bogus natural history produced by these authors.

This controversy, however, led to a few positive developments - the first was the necessity of accuracy in nature writing, including wild animal stories; the issue over the question of what the nature of animal mentality is and to what extent animals are



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governed by instincts or reason; and about establishing a balance between emotion and science as a means to understand and appreciate nature.

Despite the Nature Faker controversy, both men continued their work of producing realistic animal stories. Seton's four volume *Lives of Game Animals* (1925-27) is still considered an authoritative scientific text and guide of animals and natural history. Roberts was recognized for his poetry and novels by being recognized as the Dean of Canadian Letters. But the enduring fame of both men rests on their animal stories.

Seton's greatest story "*Lobo, the King of Currumpaw*" is about the white wolf and her mate Blanca. The story, according to the author, is based on personal observation and there is no deviation from truth. When Lobo is lured by trappers by the scent of his beloved mate, Blanca, he forgets his animal cunning and trails her dead body to the ranch where he is captured; he refuses food and water and subsequently dies, presumably of a broken heart. The wolf's death, which evokes feelings of pity and terror, touched the hearts of many in the United States and the rest of the world and was partly responsible for changing views towards the environment and starting of the conservationist movement. Justifying the charge of anthropomorphism against him, Seton defends himself when he writes that he "tried to emphasize our kinship with animals by showing that in them we can find the virtues most admired by Man. Lobo stands for Dignity and Love-Constancy; Silverpot, for Sagacity; Redruff, for Obedience....." He even argued, "the Ten Commandments are not arbitrary laws given to man, but are fundamental laws of all highly developed animals." (Seton, p 4) Similarly, in *The Biography of a Grizzly* (1900), there is clearly a sentimental touch in his portrayal of animal life, an attempt to link animals to human behavior:

They (the bear cubs) were well acquainted with the common little brown ants that harbor under the logs in the uplands, but now they came for the first time on one of the hills of the great, fat, luscious Wood-ant, and they all crowded around to lick up those that ran out. But they soon found that they were licking up more cactus-prickles and sand than ants, till their Mother said in Grizzly, 'Let me show you how.'

Neither in Seton nor Roberts does an animal actually talk, but they communicate in such a way that a kind of conversation is suggested. Seton explained his theory about this in '*Raggylug, the Story of a Cottontail Rabbit*' by saying that although rabbits cannot speak, they have a way of "conveying ideas by a system of sounds, signs, scents, whisker-touches....."

Roberts' stories, derived from his recollections of his boyhood in the forests of Brunswick, have a strong romantic flavour. *Red Fox* (1905), for example, is not very scientifically presented. The story shows how Red Fox outwits his captors twice by playing 'dead' and finds freedom in the wilderness. This represented to Roberts the triumph of the wild animal and the glorification of its strength. But not all Roberts' animals are endowed with the intelligence of Red Fox and sometimes their shortcomings are treated with humour. Roberts' stories have a strong sense of the rhythmic cycle of life and death and he too, like Seton, demonstrated the kinship between humans and animals by adding human beings as active participants to his stories. For him there is



a very narrow line separating "the lowest of the human species from the highest of the animals" (*Kindred of the Wild*, 23). In the world of non humans, animals assume human-like characteristics, while humans demonstrate their capacity of behaving like animals. For instance, in the story "The Moonlight Trails," the boy trapping rabbits forgets the trappings of civilization such as "tenderness of heart" and "sympathy with the four-footed kindred" (46) when he springs "forward, with a little cry, as a young beast might in sighting its first quarry" (51). At the same time, Roberts talks of hunters' eyes which peer "through the leafage with the keen glitter of those of a beast of prey in ambush" (190).

The works of these two brilliant naturalists have been carried forward by their ardent admirers. Their first heir was Roderick Haig-Brown whose *Silver: The Life of an Atlantic Salmon* (1931) recalls Roberts' biography of a salmon, "The Last Barrier". His masterpiece is undoubtedly *Ki-Yu; A Story of Panthers* (1934), a documentary of wild life which is reminiscent of Roberts and Seton again. Grey Owl's *Sago and Her Beaver People* (1935) also tried to emulate the realistic mode of story-telling. In his "Beaver Lodge" on Lake Ajawaan, Saskatchewan, Grey Owl shared his life with a moose and his "beaver people." In his book he laments the loss of an uncontaminated nature and extolled the gentleness of his humanlike companions. "The inflections of a beaver's voice," wrote Grey Owl in *Tales of an Empty Cabin* (1936), "resemble greatly those of a human being; they have a wide range of sounds and can convey most of their emotions.....in a manner that is remarkably intelligible" (88). Throughout the book he admires the "unconquerable poise" of his beavers and the earnest way in which they raise their families. After him, there was a gap of thirty years before another naturalist and conservationist wrote on wild life.

Farley Mowat, a passionate defender of the Arctic environment, wrote *Never Cry Wolf* (1963) based on his experiences and observations with a family of wolves. It was not intended to be written for children but its subject matter, its humorous incidents and most importantly, Mowat's natural storytelling ability make it delightful reading for children. He became so involved with wolves when he was writing this novel that he dehumanizes himself by learning how to "wolf nap" so that he could observe them as closely as possible. At the same time, he humanizes the wolves, discovering in them role models of a family life. A wolf, he argues, "never kills for fun, which is probably one of the main differences distinguishing him from man" (136). It is ironic that most of the points made about the wolf hunting habits of wolves were earlier made by Seton and Roberts.

But the truest heir to the Seton-Roberts tradition was Fred Bodsworth, who used both animals and natural history prominently in his work. For example, his novel *The Strange One* (1959) traces the parallel journey of an ornithologist and barnacle goose to Northern Canada. Similarly, *The Atonement of Ashley Morden* (1964) follows the life of a young bird enthusiast. In both these novels Bodsworth's interest in natural history is very apparent as the main characters spend a great deal of time observing and contemplating on the behaviour of animals. But it is in his first novel *Last of the Curlews* (1955) that the influence of Seton and Roberts is most obvious. The narrative follows the perilous journey of a single Eskimo curlew told from the point of view of the curlew. Paying scrupulous attention to the details of natural history, Bodsworth



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creates the myth of the dying animal, so familiar in Seton's stories, and highlights the Eskimo curlew's extinction as a species at the hands of human beings and a protest against the wanton destruction of wild life. The difference between the earlier Seton and Roberts animal stories and the later Bodsworth and Mowat ones is that in the former it is the individual animal who dies but the species remain whereas in the latter stories the entire species becomes extinct.

Sheila Burnford, Eric Knight, Helen Widell, Cameron Langford carried on the tradition of writing animal stories, though their works tended more towards sentimentalism and an attempt to use animals as vehicles of human emotion. Burnford's *The Incredible Journey* (1960), for example, is the story of three animals who make a trek in Canada. On the way back home they face many hazards, including starvation, wild animals, cold, weariness and near-drowning, but still, incredibly, they succeed. The animals are all given human attributes like most pet lovers are wont to do, but the journey seems incredible and the book does not seem to follow the honesty of Seton, Roberts, Haig-Brown and Bodsworth. Rather, it should be considered as the heir of *Black Beauty* and *Beautiful Joe*. It was only with David Allenby Smith's *Sharptooth: A Year of the Beaver* (1974) and Andy Russell's *Adventures with Wild Animals* (1977) by the conservationist and animal photographer Andy Russell, that there was a return to the rigid realism of *Ki-Yu* by Haig-Brown. *Sharptooth* is a meticulous resume of the cycle of a beaver's life for younger children without excitement or emotion.

In the 1960s and 1970s there was further growth in the interest in the realistic animal story with the emergence of Canadian Literary Studies. Authors and critics tended to see in the animal stories a reference to Canadian nationhood. It was Northorpe Frye who first proposed that Canadian literature is "best studied as a part of Canadian life." Margaret Atwood further developed these ideas in her path-breaking study *Survival: A Thematic Guide to Canadian Literature* (1972) arguing that survival is a central theme in Canadian Literature. In the chapter devoted to the animal story, she stresses emphatically on the "American hunter and Canadian victim" (74) motifs of victimhood and survival:

because the stories are told from the point of view of the animal. That's the key: English animal stories are about 'social relations'. American ones are about people killing animals: Canadian ones are about animals *being* killed, as felt emotionally from inside the fur and feathers. (74).

Atwood sees the suffering and dying animals of Canadian fiction and poetry as symbolic of American imperialism which are "direct reflections of the nation's deepest cultural anxieties." (74) She also argued that the theme of survival is closely associated with "the will *not* to survive." "Certainly," she wrote, "Canadian authors find a disproportionate amount of time making sure that their heroes die or fail. Much Canadian writing suggests that failure is required because it is felt - consciously or unconsciously - to be the only 'right' ending, the only thing that will support the characters' (or their authors') view of the universe." (34) The stories of Roberts and Seton seem to support this argument since almost all their animal protagonists meet with a tragic end.

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A significant and positive contribution of the animal realistic story is that it served as a catalyst to the animal welfare movement. Animals being presented as personalities capable of feeling mental and physical pain, thinking and reasoning, served to promote humanitarianism. Seton's proposal that animals differ from humans only in degree as far as their feelings and wants are concerned and they are therefore entitled to their rights too very much like human beings, seemed to have had an impact on the reading public.

The Realistic Animal Story seemed to almost die out in the twentieth century. There may be many reasons for this: the Nature Faker controversy, the two world wars or the fact that in recent years more importance is being given to the physical sciences rather than the biological. Or it could be that given the limited characteristics of animals, writers may have run out of ideas for their plots. Whatever be the reason, it is unlikely that the animal story will fade out considering that, as in the past, it can still command both a child and an adult audience. Of all types of writing, the realistic animal story makes perhaps the least distinction in the age of its readers – both children as well as adults can partake of and delight in animals' universal and perennial appeal. As to the question of how much fiction is appropriate to a basically realistic animal story, the answer is truly that a touch of fiction does, in fact, make animal realism more interesting.

The significant fact is that Canadian writers of the realistic animal story brought about a phenomenal change in Canada which was reflected in the growing concern about ecological issues like destruction of environment and the extinction of species. Animal books were made into motion pictures, video documentaries and television serials. Jack London's *Call of the Wild* and Mowat's *Never Cry Wolf*, two of the most beautifully photographed wilderness films, are examples of a blend of the traditional animal story, environmental concerns and an animal rights view of animals. This seems to have been in response to what Seton had dreamt of in 1901, "My chief motive, my most earnest underlying wish, has been to stop the extermination of harmless wild animals." (*qtd.in Sandlos 81*)

Over the years, Canadian animal literature has offered useful insights and a deeper understanding of the relationship between human and animal. It has attempted to reconcile Darwinism with nature, instinct with reason and human with animal and served to be a potent reminder of our biological and psychological continuity with non humans. In tying the genre firmly to a natural history tradition, the seminal and pervasive influence of Seton and Roberts can hardly be exaggerated. If animals, as envisaged by them and other writers, can rise above instinct towards the spiritual, a better, more harmonious world is surely at hand.



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## Nature's Children in the Fictional World of Manoj Das

Pragyan Prabartika Dash

On the psychological level, our consciousness is divided between two kinds of people - the children and the adults. The unnatural or supernatural theories are treated as natural among children, as they are innocent and pure. But in the adult world, they are as they are accepted after analysis, examination and re-examination by the adult mind.

The psychology of a child is more venerable than the adults. Thus, they often believe unnatural things quite naturally and accept them. Nature's mysteries often attract them and they develop a fancy for solving those mysteries. The phantasy world hidden in Nature is the magical mode for the child to cope with the adult world. Understanding becomes easier through this. Stories like "The Submerged Valley", "Farewell to a Ghost", "The Dusky Horizon", and "The Fourth Friend" etc. suggest this theory very well.

Manoj Das' fictional world is adorned with child characters. They are special and different from the children of their age. They live in fantasy worlds and still create pathos and sympathy in us when they depart from this mundane world. They are independent souls, eager to search Nature's mysteries and to be submerged in it. They belong to the real world and yet are connected to the world unknown through mysterious channels. Mr. Das presents us characters like Lily, Sita, Laxmi, Kunja, Rina and many more who belong to this special category.

In many of these stories, the author himself is the speaker. They are more or less the recollections of his childhood memories. The mysteries are unfolded before us from a child's eye-view and so the realistic message or fact behind them can easily be understood by the adults.

Manoj Das himself once confirmed the relationship of his creativity with this Super Nature in one interview with Ramendra Kumar:

My birthplace, a remote hamlet on the sea, was as beautiful as a fairytale land in my childhood, with two natural lakes abounding in lotuses between our house and the sea. Unconsciously, in my rendezvous with the sea and the breeze and the moon, I had probably developed the habit of expressing myself to them in silence. Of course, so many must be passing through similar experiences of dreamy times, moments of reverie. In me they left an impact, to manifest in my creative writing. It must have happened to several other writers too. (Boloji.com oct.9, 2011)

This collection of memoirs recounts the author's childhood experiences in the quiet and supine India of villages. The Indian village in the first half of the last century was not a fairytale world, as numerous accounts of human misery set against its backdrop have testified over the years, but it was still a world where a child could run across a green meadow studded with palm trees, dreaming of catching the end of a huge rainbow spanning the sky.

Set in Sankhari, the author's village by the sea in Odisha, the reminiscences are imbued with a childlike sense of wonder : the dreaded butcher thus turns out to be a messenger from a goddess, while a princely exterior hides a hapless vagrant. Even the ghosts are not frightening in this place, and the journey to the alien world across the river is filled with possibilities, more of romance than of terror.

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Remembers the writer in *Chasing the Rainbow* :

My village was to the west of the school. It was sundown and the sky was spattered with an uncanny red when I set out. There was not a soul anywhere on the vast stretches of sand with clumps of bushes. I walked as fast as I could and was turning slightly left to enter the second half of the road when, under a bush on my right, I noticed a corpse, lying upside down. I shifted my eyes hurriedly, but not before it appeared to have nodded. Next I saw a jackal shooting out of the bush. But fear had struck me at the speed of lightning before I could rationalize the nod, that it was the result of the living creature tugging at the dead one's legs (12).

"The Dusky Horizon" is a fearful conversion of imaginative adolescence in words. It is a daring and adventurous fancy; a deeply moving love and affection that ends in pathos; and an emotion, unrecognized by the young heart, coated with sympathy and fellow-feeling. The characters are all in their adolescence - the age of questioning and anxiety, the age in which emotions convert through inexpressible modes. The boys, always fascinated by the central character Lily who is presented before them like a fairy, got very attached to her and then came across such remorse from which they never could free themselves in their entire lives. Lily's death was sudden and unfortunate and it changed the lives of the three boys later.

The striking point in this story is the mysterious fascination of Lily towards the world unknown. As we know, the children of the village were well aware of the fact that whatever may be the occasion, they should not try the authenticity of the fantasy stories that can induce fear and awe. It might also happen that the not-really-believed monsters under the bed who might grab your bare ankles with their cold, bony fingers turn into seriously disabling phobias that bring night-terrors and years of insomnia. On the other hand, in the same stories they also hope for a fantasy world that is ubiquitously cute and saccharined, a world of "happy-fantasy" from which the inconveniences of pain, death, disease, cruelty, and so on are completely absent. How could they deal with those stories that induce fear and those that present a world free of pain?

"The Peacock Hill" and its surrounding forest mystified the girl so much that she eagerly wanted a visit there. It was the source of all the fascinations and actually had something extraordinary and mysterious about it. The associated stories about the ogre and the ghosts make it also forbidden, yet welcoming. After sunset, its terrifying yet impressive stance affects the 'rural darkness' which is 'awfully alive'. And 'when the moon hung over the hill, the tall trees atop it looked like a solemn committee of supernatural beings in session', there was a rumor in the village that a fire-sprouting ogre was living on that hill. Sometimes it was said to be Nana Saheb, and at other time a Yaksha, the guardian of the immeasurable wealth lying buried in the hill.

The boys, of course, believed in the uncanny nature of the Hill and the presence of the ogre there. They informed Lily about the possibility of goblins, ghosts and demons, corporeal or ethereal to be present in the forest. But, here is more anxiety than fear, exactly the childhood instinct to know the forbidden thing. The characters never deny to each other their beliefs, rather they risk their lives by going with them and even lose one among them in their search for knowing the unknown. Lily, despite all the horrible warnings of the friends, strongly urged to go up the Peacock Hill. She was too obsessed, too occupied with Nature that she never cared for her safety and security. Her death was too pathetic, but it seems to be her destiny.

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"The Submerged Valley" is a story grown up from the memory lane of the author's childhood. Things and incidents are judged by the child's eye-view. The author-child is too attached to the village and its natural beauty. It is shown in the very first lines of the story when the author started writing about the significance of the village with all its human attributes. But what is most important in the story is Abolkara, the disobedient boy, who lives in his own world of mysteries and fantasies, which is known from his mysterious talks with invisible channels and his obscure gesticulations. He created awe and wonder about himself among the people by making them believe that he was underwater for five years. Not only small children, but adults also enquired him to know about his mysterious existence. It seems that the boy himself believed in his self-made story, after people's appreciation. That is why he refused to leave the valley, which was going to be submerged once again after five years. Anyhow, he was safely rescued at last, but it seems that he was ready to face the danger by drowning himself in the dam. No fear for Nature's fury the boy had; exactly like the boy of "Son and the Father". He was careless towards his own life, wanted to be merged in Nature, like a true Nature's child. These characters create pathos and pity in us as well as point towards the hardcore realities which create many barriers to attain some simple pleasure.

"Kuturi Nani", which appears in *Mystery of the Missing Cap and Other Stories*, is another story recovered from the memories of the author's childhood. He retold the tales which he had listened in his childhood from Kuturi Nani, the poor milk-woman. The childhood of the author was often mesmerized listening to the fantastic tales of Kuturi Nani. She used to tell : "Somewhere beyond the river was situated her magnificent castle, entirely made of ivory, lighted by a hundred torch lights. It was a magic castle and not easily visible to a passer-by" (207).

The narrator recalls her poor condition : "...she and her consort were under a curse. As soon as the sun rose, her husband turned into a fearful bear. He continued to growl and scratch - and often scratched our Nani too - till midnight when he turned into a prince charming" (207-208).

Many of the author's childhood days come under the spell of the story of "Kuturi Nani". Whenever he used to keep gazing beyond the river at dawn, he could almost hear a growl of protest from Nani's husband in the process of his metamorphosis into a bear. He often wished to go inside her castle when she would one day succeed the bear to put to sleep through her melody of which he was a connoisseur. One day all these hopes of the child shattered into pieces when he saw the poor lady brutally beaten by the drunkard husband. Receiving a torch light as a gift from the lady then seems impossible which was committed by the Nani before. But the child was more surprised when he actually got it from her. It gave him more grief than excitement as the lady had to pay for it for her stealing that object from the cruel husband.

Another mysterious villa is introduced in "Farewell to a Ghost" which appears in *Selected Fiction*. The only inhabitant of this villa is a girl-ghost whose presence is taken for granted by everyone in the village. But the children never feared it, instead they had a lot of sympathy and fellow feeling towards its inhabitant. The author as a child describes:

It was on moonlit nights that the deserted villa looked particularly fascinating. From the river bank we looked at it in long silence. When the fitful breeze made waves of the tall yellow grass around it, the house looked like a phantom castle



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floating on an unreal sea. Though pale, desolate and eerie ... it was as fascinating as a fairy tale world" (100).

The atmosphere touches our heart when the villagers bid farewell to the ghost, offer her food and presents and shed tears for her. The children change their playground to the nearest place the ghost is believed to be sent, which seems to be obvious in this story.

Sita's character in "Sita's Marriage" is as lively as any girl in the society. Her psychology can be understood from a child's point of view. But her psychological development goes otherwise than the conventional way. Her sheer anxiety takes her into total mystification and when it breaks, it breaks with many more theories and beliefs. The little girl is too obsessed with the idea of marriage and somehow being convinced that her only possible bridegroom is to be Lord Rama, she enters into the extreme of her fancy and in her dream visualizes her marriage with him. Her entire growth is occupied with this fantasy world. In between, the suicide of the near-by girl shatters her fanciful idea of marriage and her confusion between reality and dream increases. She never comes out of this confused state and meets her death on the stage of readying herself for the real marriage. The mystery behind her gloomy life and quiet death only suggests that the naivety of a child's mind may not be able to understand the so-called conventional realities, yet there is a fair chance that somewhere we also fail to understand a child's mind. First, we allow him / her to cultivate an imaginary world, and then, we ourselves shatter it with our own hands.

In this context, says Dr. P Raja:

Any day can be the day of death for anyone and no extraordinary disease or situation was necessary for that. But Sita's quiet death assumes a significance in the context of the mystic faith that certain souls dedicated to the divine would decide to depart when their inner life is threatened by external circumstances (146).

Where Sita meets her end being mystified, Lily in "Dusky Horizon" and the boy in "Son and Father" surrender themselves in front of the mysterious fury of Nature, as if they are Nature's children. Lily, instead of all the negative premonitions of the friends, strongly feels the urge to go up the Peacock Hill. She is too obsessed, too occupied with Nature's mystery that she never cares for herself. Her death is sudden, unexpected and too pathetic. She cannot overpower the storm and the rain, falls into a precipice and lies there forever. Exactly in the same manner, the son of the watchman in the story "Son and Father" which appears in *Selected Fiction*, risks his life by running through rain, thunder and lightning. He never responds to any name, but only to the voice of Nature, recognizes it through thunder and welcomes it by stretching his hands up towards the sky. He runs mysteriously over the valley all through the stormy evening. The other day he is found to be clutched to a tree whose life is taken by lightning. The thoughts that haunt Samir, the writer are:

Why was the boy there at all? What was the purpose in his appearing like a string of lightning, playing like a string of lightning and disappearing like a string of lightning? (170)

And the writer again reveals the mystery behind the boy's nature by conforming that there must be something beyond the limitations of a mere mind - something deeper and luminous - something with which one could probably gather in a brief moment experiences of aeons.



Both Lily and this boy welcome the disasters of storm and receive their death welcomingly. The magical relationship of them in Nature must have been maternal, as both of them were motherless. The peace and solace were also reflected on their faces, even after their death. These characters seem to be careless about the disasters of storm and receive their death welcomingly.

A similar attachment is found with Kunja in "The Kite". The attachment is of a creator for his creation which gradually becomes nostalgic due to long-term imprisonment. Like other children, once Kunja also loved his life to live in a fanciful way. But what he gets is only torture, humiliation and ultimate banishment from society. Kunja's adolescent days suffer inside the prison-walls which ought to be spent in playing and learning. Once he made a beautiful kite which was entangled in the landlord's tree and could not be recovered. The last sight of the kite is always fresh in his memory and he longs for it his entire life.

The attachment of a creator for his creation is obvious and precious. The relation is heavenly, but it also demands a fulfillment and satisfied attainment. When that is not been availed, the creator suffers through an emotional turmoil. Here, the inner suffering of Kunja increases day by day, leading him towards utter frustration. His fancy towards the object increases more and more till the soul gets salvation by leaving the physical body for ever.

As situation and environment put barriers in front of Kunja, he goes far from coping with realities, and lives an imaginary life with his longings and desires which often take the shape of unreal things. Here, the kite is not at all a mere non-living object of creation for Kunja; it possesses a living spirit in it, the spark of life and hopes and aspirations of freedom. The fall of the kite is the fall of every spark from the life of Kunja.

Torture, humiliation and unfair imprisonment result in ultimate banishment from flying a kite. The kite is lost; the result comes out as helplessness and frustration, later converting into revolt and murder instinct. Here, the rise and fall of the kite and its later elimination from life can be the signs of the childhood spirit of flying high which later need encouragement. But Kunja is burdened with sorrow, insult, poverty and helplessness by society and the so-called law-keepers. The long-term imprisonment presents him complete alienation, solitude and an ever longing desire for freedom. But everything loses its effects on him with the re-appearance of the kite, the soul-loving object, the source of life spirit, long lost from Kunja's heart. Thus, the journey begins from where it had stopped once, but is now not ready to be stopped by any barrier, any set of rules and any law-keepers of society.

After a gap of seven long years, the kite's re-appearance makes Kunja completely bewildered, the source of life comes back, the spirit become overjoyed. Now, the journey begins from that point, it was being checked once, now ready to overcome any barrier, any set of rules and any law-keepers of society. The Kite here is the symbol of freedom of the soul that seems to be free from entanglement, cut off from strings to fly as high as it can and to go beyond the horizon, away from the world known. Kunja runs for it, totally amazed, bewildered, scandalized; unchecked by the police and the people. His running is the quest for salvation from the mystical point of view; it is the process of attainment of long lost desires, from the psychological point of view. Thus, it interprets multiple realities before us. He does not listen to anyone and ignores every rule and warning. Thus the running seems abnormal to others who fail to realize the truth



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behind this. They only visualize the still alive physical body which runs towards the sea, now free from everything. Already, the soul departs from the body, thus unable to listen to any sound, unable to realize the engulfing waves, and unable to account the distance towards the horizon. What others see is not the ultimate reality; what is reality for Kunja is that others fail to see.

In "Laxmi's Adventure" which appears in *Story Land*, Laxmi's innocent demands and complaints communicate her with the deity, what humanized the deity and divinized the child. Here the boundary between reality and surreality is crossed, as the level between the two became same. Her intimacy prompts her to open her heart in front of the deity, and she shares her family problems before her. She unfolds her trouble with arithmetics, her father's poverty and her mother's sorrowful life because of it. Her conversation with the deity is of a very ordinary level - her concern about the deity's diet, the use of loudspeakers for praying by people etc. She is confident about the response of God, on which point she takes position between the great mystics. She asks innocently: "Did Dhruva and Prahlad use loudspeakers for their prayer song?" (41) This question may seem foolish, but it has depth of divine inquisition. Later she prays the deity again: "And if you would somehow make the priest sleep every day at noon, I could visit you often" (43). She becomes a spiritual aspirant for the deity which is devoid of greed and ambition.

What proceeds in the story is not only pathetic but also cruel. Her taking a couple of bananas from the deity's plate is only an exhibition of her affection towards the deity that was misinterpreted by the selfish and the diseased human mind. She cautions the Goddess not to eat all the bananas before her departure from the temple. Her child-mind was looking at the deity in a truthful, honest manner. But the priest interpreted her act as theft and blamed her for that. She was chased by him, in a desperate position that led her into a pond. The village elders were also too superstitious to cast aspersions on her act. She lost her life forever in that pond. Still some elders, though ignorant about divinity and human faith expressed their intense pleasure by describing this unfortunate death to be a result of God's anger, though they did not care for their own misdeeds. The writer describes: "They did not know if the deity had any knowledge of their deeds; but they were most loud in their praise of the Lord and hoped that He heard them all right" (45). Where Laxmi belongs to a world of surreality, these people belong to a cruel real world. K.K. Gandhi writes: "One is a world of unselfish love, total faith, open heartedness and sympathy; the other is of hypocrisy, falsehood and hatred" (*Rock Pebbles*, 2009).

Laxmi passed away silently, but created an unexpected impact on the priest, completely overpowered by the shock of the incident. His power of reasoning goes away, so the level of understanding touches a higher plane, sending his physical body to utter silences. He is mystified with his new vision, thus receiving a total reality beheld by the little girl. He meets with a mysterious perception. This perception of the priest establishes the glory of the human-divine relationship. The departure of the soul from Laxmi's body has an obvious connection with the deity's soul that immediately left the stone idol. The priest's last prayer to be born without a tongue in the next birth explains the inner suffering transferred to his soul from the very soul of the poor girl who was choked to death, thinking about her supposed guilt.

When we analyse Laxmi's character, another character automatically comes before our eyes. She is Rina, born and brought up in a sophisticated urban society just opposite



to Laxmi's. She longs for her mother's love, a cancer patient, too close to her death. Rina waits for the letter from her mother but cannot get one as she is no more in the world though Rina is unaware of this fact. The only consolation is the one letter from the mother, long before written to the child which she preserves as a precious gift. But one day she sacrifices that also for the author who is perceived by her as awaiting for a letter himself.

Here, Rina seems to be the Nature's child though not perceived so among the circus of moving people. It seems as if her world has stopped to move on, quite entangled to the mother's memories. Her memories often enable the reader to shed tears as we can visualize a loving mother helping the child to catch butterfly or pluck flowers. Rina's longing desire to meet the mother with the clear impossibility of that makes the reader helpless and sad.

In "The Fourth Friend", we find a very rare type of relationship between children and Nature. As the name suggests, the fourth friend is the other friend; not a human, but an affectionate tiger. Ramu, Joy and Sekhar, the three friends, on their way from a cinema, faced a flood unexpectedly. More unexpected things occurred one after another, binding a new relationship between the children and Nature. When the three friends were neck deep in flood water, the atmosphere seemed to be supernatural. Mr. Das describes:

An hour passed, with the water level continuing to rise. But the atmosphere was growing quieter. Wails and shrieks from far and near and the sound of conch-shells had stopped. There was no barking of dogs, but from time to time some of them moaned (9-10).

And then emerged the figure of the floating tiger from the darkness of night which was sufficient to scare the children. But magically, unbelievably, the frightful tiger behaved just opposite to its nature in this abnormal condition. Flood was shocking, but more shocking was the tiger that came out as a fellow sufferer. They passed the night together without knowing each other's presence, which presented them complete bewilderment, in the morning, when they visualized the scene. But unbelievably, the tiger not only saved Joy from a python, but also protected him from falling from the tree. It developed a human relationship between them, by jumping into their boat, receiving food and care from them, and finally convinced the three friends to take the tiger for granted as the fourth one and to accompany it to the village. Mr. Das writes:

The clouds looked fearful and the sun was struggling hard to shine through them. The familiar landscape had suddenly become alien to them. Amidst all this they were waking up to the thrill of conquering their fear for the most dreadful situation imaginable - their proximity to the tiger (16-17).

There is an adolescent fantasy throughout the novella, from the beginning to the end. The theme is the tiger's journey from the circus to the village, through the flood, and again to the circus through the human friends. But what wonders us is the spontaneous love and concern of the boys for the animal, as they are ready to risk their lives for its sake. They are patient to each other at the time of Natural disaster and even humorously pass time. They are no doubt Nature's children. The stories of Manoj Das illustrate that in contrast to the adults, the children are fascinated by the remote, and not by the commonplace. It is because they possess an elemental simplicity. They are after obtaining pure pleasure and unsullied joy and do not strain themselves to attain specific objectives for furthering self-interest. In contrast to the adults, their response to the issues is synthetic, not analytic. Hence, they partake of the spirit of the universe



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and not of the affairs of the mundane world. Their method to discover the mystery of the universe is not empirical like the adults. Theirs is the instinctual acceptance and enjoyment of the spirit and beauty of the universe. They are the children of Nature.

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## An Ecocritical Analysis of Ruskin Bond's "Angry River"

S Kumaran

In this age of ecological imbalance, children's literature is an appropriate choice to nurture the importance of preserving one's own environment in the young minds and it also paves way for the establishment of harmony in the interaction between humans and nature. This paper explores Ruskin Bond's "Angry River," a favourite short story in most of children's collection, to bring out the principles of ecology. Some of the principles of ecology propounded by Bond in the short story include: humans' dependence on nature and the laws of nature, intrinsic value and inherent worth of non-human others, right appropriation of nature, nature as the harbinger of human lives, and sense of place.

Bond's depiction of humans' dependence on nature and the laws of nature is commendable. In the short story, there are only four human characters and they include Sita, a young girl who is aged less than sixteen, her grandfather and grandmother, and the boy Krishan, who saves Sita's life during flood. Sita and her grandparents live in the small island that is situated in the middle of a big river which has its own system of functioning: "The river swept round the island, sometimes clawing at its banks, but never going right over it" (Angry River 65). The river had flooded the island before twenty years when there was no house or humans on it. Sita and her grandparents have come to the island just ten years ago and they live in a small hut which has been built on a huge rock. The whole family respects the laws of nature and acknowledges the presence of nature through their reverence for it. There is a peepul tree which is the only tree in the island and which has withstood even the great flood. "It was an old tree. A seed had been carried to the island by a strong wind some fifty years back, had found shelter between two rocks, had taken root there, and had sprung up to give shelter to a small family" (Angry River 65). The tree has its spirit that commands the respect of humans. Sita is warned by her grandmother not to yawn under the tree: "And if you must yawn, always snap your fingers in front of your mouth. If you forget to do that, a spirit might jump down your throat!" (Angry River, 65). Moreover, the grandmother compares the peepul tree to the body of Lord Krishna and fosters the reverential outlook towards nature.

Nature is an integral part of the characters. They could read the voice of nature and predict its future course: "The sound of the river had always been with them, although they were seldom aware of it; but that night they noticed a change in its sound. There was something like a moan, like a wind in the tops of tall trees, and a swift hiss at the water swept round the rocks and carried away pebbles. And sometimes there was a rumble, as loose earth fell into the water" (Angry River 70). Sita's Grandfather has good knowledge about the river because of his daily interaction with it. He has been fishing in the river for ten years and knows where to catch the fish of his choice. Moreover, he knows where the river is shallow and can tell which bait to use to catch the fish of one's option. The old man has also taught his son how to fish but his son has gone to work in a factory which is a hundred miles away from the island. As the oldman has no grandson, he brings up his granddaughter Sita like a boy. When Sita's grandfather informs her that she has to be alone for a few days as he is planning to take Sita's grandmother to a hospital, Sita is not afraid of being alone as she had been alone before. What troubles her is the voice of nature: "Sita was not afraid of being alone, but she did not like the look of the river. That morning, when she had gone

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down to fetch water, she had noticed that the level had risen. Those rocks which were normally spattered with the droppings of snipe and curlew and other water-birds had suddenly disappeared" (Angry River 68). As there is no other way, she accepts her grandfather's words and prepares herself to be alone.

Sita's readiness to accept and to adapt to the changing face of nature reveals how humans should strive to transform the challenges posed by nature through sheer correspondence with it. Sita keeps a doll named "Mumta" as her companion who answers all the questions of Sita "eventhough the answers could only be heard by Sita" (Angry River 71). When Sita asks Mumta whether she is afraid of the river, Mumta reveals the true nature of the river thus: "Don't be afraid of. The river has always been good to us" (Angry River 71). Further, she tells Sita that they can climb up the peepul tree (a part of nature), when there is flood, as the river has never gone higher than it. When Sita wakes up in the morning, she reads the changed face of nature and hints that the river water has gone over her favourite rock and "the river was no longer green and blue and flecked with white but a muddy colour" (Angry River 72). Further, when she hears the threatening voice of thunder she is confused and asks Mumta whether the gods of the mountains are angry with her. Though she is perturbed by the changing face of nature, she couldn't stay indoors for long. She comes out and finds the banks of the river gets expanded and is reaching the plains. Moreover, the people are carrying bundles of their belongings and driving their cattle through flooded fields to reach a safer high ground. Their departure indicates Sita that there is no safety for her life but she is prepared to risk the rain.

People's association of gods with nature holds scope for better communion between humans and nature. Through Sita, one can understand how the gods are associated with nature. According to Manes (1996), "in addition to human language, there is also the language of birds, the wind, earthworms, wolves, and waterfalls- a world of autonomous speakers whose intents (especially for hunter-gatherer peoples) one ignores at one's peril (15)" and the humans in the short story proclaim the same idea. Sita remembers the stories told by her grandmother. The stories portray young Krishna as 'friend of birds;' Indra as the source of 'thunder and lightning;' Vishnu, 'whose steed was a great white bird;' Ganesh with 'elephant's head;' and Hanuman as 'the monkey-god' (Angry River 75). Through stories, the grandmother has acknowledged nature as a source to reach the Supreme Being. In this regard, Buell (1995) says that "The nonhuman environment is present not merely as a framing device but as a presence that begins to suggest that human history is implicated in natural history (7-8)" and Sita fulfills his words. She too acknowledges the transforming power of nature and worships it in all forms.

The laws of nature are acknowledged by the characters, as all the members of the family accept the odds of their lives, as part of human life and they lead a harmonious life with nature. They have also acquired the ability to predict the future course of nature through their absolute interaction with it. Sita comes out of the house and predicts: "The sky was dark with monsoon clouds. It had rained all night, and in a few hours it would rain again. The monsoon rains had come early, at the end of June. Now it was the middle of July, and already the river was swollen. Its rushing sound seemed nearer and more menacing than usual" (Angry River 67). Though Sita is young and meek, her daily communion with nature has made her very strong as she exhibits the ability to walk barefooted and barelegged. Further, she is very much confident of her feet as she feels her toes are attuned to suit all kinds of rocks. In spite of her 'thin' body frame, she is remarkably strong. It is their ready acceptance of the odds of life, induced

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by nature, which makes the characters fit to lead a peaceful and pleasant life.

Bond considers non-human others as a constituent part of humans and proclaims that humans can learn from them. Sita acknowledges the non-human others ie, cock and hens as her counterpart and she concerns about their safety more than her own. Moreover, she is anxious to learn what to be done when the river rises and how to safe guard her hens and goats. Infact she tells that "having them with her took away some of the loneliness" (Angry River 77). At the same time, she learns from them, the three hens and a cock, that the river does not bother them. They are interested only in food and are least concerned about the fury of the river. Further, Sita feels that her confidence is boosted by them. She reveals how to behave with the non-human others as she has always considered them at par with humans. William Rueckert (1996) in his essay "Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism" underlines the urgency of balance in the interaction between humans and nature thus: "We are violating the laws of nature, and the retribution from the biosphere will be more terrible than any inflicted on humans by gods. In ecology, man's tragic flaw is his anthropocentric ... (as opposed to biocentric) vision and his compulsion to conquer ... exploit every natural thing. (113)" Most of the problems between humans and non-human others are the result of humans failure to understand the non-human others and Sita enlightens humans about right outlook towards them: "She moved about in the pouring rain, chasing the hens into a shelter behind the hut. A harmless brown snake, flooded out of its hole, was moving across the open ground. Sita picked up a stick, scooped the snake up, and dropped it between a cluster of rocks. She had no quarrel with snakes. They kept down the rates and the frogs" (Angry River 70). By acknowledging the inherent worth of non-human others, Sita finds a way to sustain a healthy relationship with them.

Bond's proclamation of right appropriation of nature by humans is the need of the hour. Though humans are dependent on nature for their survival, they should resort to right appropriation of nature. They should not consume the natural resources out of greed rather should utilize them according to their need. Foster (2001) quotes Bukharin to underscore man's dependence on nature thus: "Man, as an animal form, as well as human society, are products of nature, part of this great, endless whole. Man can never escape from nature, and even when he 'controls' nature, he is merely making use of the laws of nature for his own ends. (241)" Sita depends on nature for her survival only. When she feels hungry she eats "some dried peas, and warmed up some goat's milk" (Angry River, 70) and her grandfather fishes in the river just to quench the hunger of the family and is not interested in marketing his talent. Though the family lacks any form of modern comforts, they are content with their right appropriation of nature and do not involve in the misappropriation of the natural resources.

Nature accompanies humans even during its changing face. Sita is much troubled by the incessant rain as she climbs the tree "There was water everywhere. The world had become one vast river ... The sky was banked with massive, moisture-laden clouds. Thunder rolled down from the hills, and the river seemed to take it up with a hollow booming sound" (Angry River 75-76). Further, she finds a drowned buffalo being carried downstream and comes across woods, small trees, bushes, and other household items floating on the water. When she has started packing the important belongings of her hut so as to safeguard them from being washed away by flood, she realises that the water has already entered her hut. Horrified by the sight of water she dashes out of the hut and runs towards the peepul tree to safeguard her life. She climbs carefully up the 'strong arms' of the tree and comforts herself on a 'familiar branch.' After climbing up



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the tree, Sita realises that she has forsaken Mumta and feels sorry for her inadvertent act. She feels lonely and looks for someone to give her company. To her surprise, she notices a "jet-black jungle crow settled in the upper branches, and Sita saw that there was a nest in them, a crow's nest, an untidy platform of twigs wedged in the fork of a branch. In the nest were four blue-green, speckled eggs. The crow sat on them and cawed disconsolately" (Angry River 79) and Sita becomes much happy as she finds a companion in the crow. Thus, she unravels how nature itself acts as a haven for her and how it accompanies her in the form of the crow.

Non-human others have an extraordinary power to predict the course of nature. When the tree is being shaken by the wind and the rain, "the crow cawed and flew up, circled the tree a few times, and returned to the nest" (Angry River 80). Further, it seems that the crow has predicted something as it is reluctant to settle in the tree and keeps on flying: "The crow kept flying around the tree. The bird was in a terrible rage. The nest was still in the branches - but not for long... The tree lurched and twisted slightly to one side, and the nest fell into the water. Sita saw the eggs go one by one" (Angry River 81). The bird follows the tree for about fifty yards "hoping that something still remained in the tree" (Angry River 82) but realises the futility of its search and starts flying across the river. Sita becomes all alone again.

Nature acts as a harbinger of human life and the animals in pristine nature do not harm humans. Sita notices from the tree "The river was very angry, it was like a wild beast, a dragon on the rampage, thundering down from the hills and sweeping across the plain, bringing with it dead animals, uprooted trees, household goods, and huge fish choked to death by the swirling mud" (Angry River 80). She clings to a branch of the tree that moves very slowly, in the river, because of its large size and she feels pain in her arms as she has been holding the branch for long. Further, she realises her difficult position and desires to swim to some 'rooftop or tree.' Meantime, she comes across a small boat near her and the young boy in the boat accommodates her in the small boat. The boy is slim and he is with 'hard teeth' and is somewhat darker than Sita. The boat moves swiftly and Sita's home is left far behind. The boy reveals his name as Krishan and he lives near the foothills. The boy too has good understanding about nature and he tells Sita: "We cannot fight the river, we must go wherever it takes us" (Angry River 84). He relies on nature to quench his hunger and that of Sita. He takes two mangoes from his basket and offers one to Sita who devours it heartily and who forgets all about flood, for a few moments, due to the 'heavenly' flavor of the fruit. Their boat moves slowly and it goes much away across the plains and they have their dialogue all through the way. "Towards evening the river changed colour. The sun, low in the sky, emerged from behind the clouds, and the river changed slowly from grey to gold, from gold to deep orange, and then, as the sun went down, all the colours were drowned in the river, and the river took on the colour of the night" (Angry River 85). They want to get out of water before night and row faster and soon they are in a forest rowing between the tall trees.

During the night, they have come across many wild animals such as elephants, Sambar Stag, Python, etc. but the animals have not harmed them. According to Baker (1993) "Much of our understanding of human identity and our thinking about the living animal reflects the diverse uses to which the concept of animal is put in popular culture ... culture shapes our reading of animals just as much as animals shape our reading of culture. (4)" Sita and Krishan get up in the morning and finish the mangoes that are remaining and continue rowing their boat. They reach a village and the villagers offer them food and shelter. One of the farmers helps Sita in reaching Shahgani, where



her grandparents are and meanwhile Krishan parts from her saying he will meet her soon. On reaching Shahganj, Sita meets her grandfather and comes to know her grandmother is no more. It is again nature in the form of forest that has safeguarded Sita and Krishan from flood and their escape from the wild animals reveals the true nature of animals.

Humans cannot isolate themselves from their sense of place. Sita and her grandfather return to their island after a few days. "There was more rain, but the worst was over. Grandfather still had two of the goats; it had not been necessary to sell more than one. He could hardly believe ... the tree had disappeared ... the tree that had seemed as permanent as the island, as much a part of his life as the river itself" (Angry River 90-91). Though they are well aware of the insecurity of the place and the impending disaster, they desire to live there as they feel their bond with the place cannot be forsaken. Further, they are aware that recycling of things is a part of human life. In this regard, Munck (2000) observes that "We can learn a basic lesson from nature: that nothing can survive on the planet unless it is cooperative part of a larger, global whole.... Commoner called for 'closing the circle,' through recycling and other measures designed to complete the great ecological cycle. (27)" They set right their hut learn to live peacefully with the remains. "Slowly, the rains came to an end. The floodwaters had receded, and in the villages people were beginning to till the land again and sow crops for the winter months.... The days were warm and sultry. The water in the river was no longer muddy..." (Angry River 92). Every day, Sita expects the arrival of Krishan and finds her expectations turning into a reality when she finds Krishan standing beside her one day. They start conversing: "Sometimes the river is angry, and sometimes it is kind," said Sita. "We are part of the river," said the boy. "We cannot live without it." It was a good river, deep and strong, beginning in the mountains and ending in the sea" (Angry River 93). Further, their dialogue discloses their affinity with nature and proclaims change as a part of nature.

Thus, through the short story Ruskin Bond has proclaimed the principles of ecology and motivates the young minds to feel their interrelatedness to the cosmos.

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## Subverting Women: Disney's use of Scopophilia in "The Little Mermaid"

Debadrita Chakraborty

"Except for the first time, there is a new nymphet quality to the virginal heroine. Above her green tail Disney's Ariel wears only a string bikini top made from a couple of sea shells. And as innocent, wide-eyed and flipper-tailed as she is, there is something distinctly sexy about her too," writes Kathi Maio in her article "Disney's Dolls."

With the death of Walt Disney in the year 1966, the "cultural tsunami" - Walt Disney film corporation from the 1980s through the 1990s have depicted the heroines of its animated motion pictures as the archetype of the of the ideal feminine physique, be it Belle, Ariel or Jasmine. In addition to the traditional feminine virtues of domesticity and homemaking, Disney heroines acquire voluptuous curves, "petite waistline, perfectly proportioned facial structures, skin tight, skin baring garments that attract members of the opposite sex," and all this to attract as many consumers and to make Disney films "as successful a commercial product as any of Disney's early triumphs" (Hastings, 1993). This depiction of women as salacious, seducing beings - as sexual objects, subject to the "male gaze" is what Laura Mulvey condemns in her essay "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema." Drawing on Freud's psycho analytic theory of scopophilia or the pleasurable act of voyeurism, Mulvey identifies this love of looking (scopophilia) as a salient feature of cinema.

The Walt Disney Corporation or Disney, in order to benefit economically from films adopts scopophilia and "inundates the viewer with delightful images ... and erotic signs" an approach or strategy which began with the production of "The Little Mermaid" in 1989, where a bikini clad Ariel's quest for true love abounds in the sexual rather than the spiritual. In the film Disney simplifies Andersen's moral narrative to present a stereotypical "happy ending" and hence obscures the virtues of femininity in Ariel leaving her no more than an object of desire, capable of seducing and alluring her love, the prince into marriage.

In a patriarchal society where women have been repressed in all domains of life, social, cultural and linguistic, cinema does not remain far behind, posing women as nothing more than mere objects of desire. Disney patronizes this exhibitionism, eliminating the moral values associated with the Mermaid in Anderson's tale and presents us a lovesick headstrong teenager 'modelled after a slightly anorexic Barbie doll' (Giroux) who lacks an agency and voice of her own even though she gets it back at the end of the film. Further, by contriving a marriage plot, Disney only aims at simplifying the moral complications, nullifying the motif of torture and death that the mermaid falls prey to in Anderson's story.

Disney, writes Hastings "sought out simple stories and simplified them to create 'nice' children's films." (Hastings: 1993) Nevertheless, Disney does this at the cost of marginalizing the heroine, Ariel, by preventing her to acquire an identity of her own in the film, for although she appears to sing of autonomy and independence in the beginning of the film, this desire of hers is somewhat reduced when she falls in love with prince Eric (thanks to Disney's cinematic manipulations) seducing him with her "body language" when she loses her voice to Ursula, the sea witch. Perhaps being a part of the patriarchal society, it is quite natural for Disney to subvert the female



characters while men are presented as real heroes, who with their indomitable power prove their mettle by overthrowing the evil.

Shifting into the world of the sea, Disney's superb cinematography takes us in a joyride into the sea kingdom, introducing us to the mer-people on their way to attend a concert in the king's palace. The concert begins but is soon called off - the reason, Ariel's absence from her singing debut as we see her watching a sunken ship in a rather dilapidated surrounding as opposed to the grandiose of her father, King Triton's palace. The ship for her is "fantastic" while its contents, the fork and the windpipe, a discovery that is "wonderful, her satchel full of human trinkets that she saves from the jaws of the shark even at the cost of risking her own life exhibits her overt obsession with the human world. From the beginning of the film, Ariel appears to be a rebel, her hair unkempt, almost devouring her. Unlike her sisters, Ariel does not perform the duties of an obedient daughter, for instance she forgets "the concert" and swims up "to the surface" breaking the rules set by her father. Instead she demands "access, autonomy and mobility, she yearns for subjecthood and for the ability to participate in public (human) life. (Sells 179), she voices out her desire to "be where the people are/...see 'em dancin'...walking around those...feet...to explore that shore above [to be] a part of that world in the song "Part of Your World." Her desire for legs to be a part of the human world connotes her adolescent yearning for adulthood, an adolescent's yearning to be sexually attractive, for only then can she as Sells puts it "[gain] access to the white male system." (Sells 179) signalling to the young female audience that one needs to be physically attractive to be accepted within a male dictated world, yet another example of male domination thanks to Disney's portrayal of women as a sexual object. Unlike Disney's version, the mermaid in Anderson's tale aspires for an immortal soul when she learns from her grandmother that "human beings have souls that live forever, even after their bodies have turned to dust. (Tatar 315), thus her yearning for the human world is born out of her desire for the immortal soul, in that her desire takes a spiritual shape as opposed to the craving for a physical transformation that we see in Ariel.

Ariel's desire to "be a part of the [human] world is further intensified when she sets her eyes on Prince Eric for the first time in the ship wreck scene. Ariel's love at first sight is evident when she says, "Oh - he's very handsome, isn't he?" (Trite) However whereas in the beginning Ariel's fascination with the human world stems out of her desire to explore, to possess the "treasures" of the human world that she holds in a secret hidey hole, her interest in the human world writes Sells is somewhat reduced when she falls in love with Prince Eric. (Sells 180). By bringing in the romance plot Disney paralyzes Ariel's demand for autonomy, power and access into the upper world, subjugating her position in an androcentric society. Ariel thus remains a mere puppet throughout her life, monitored by her father under the sea and later by her husband Prince Eric after their marriage. As Kathi Miao puts it, "In the end, Ariel is a woman without a social support system, investing her entire life in a romance. Not a situation that I've ever found to have 'happily ever after' written all over it." (Miao: 1993). For Anderson's Mermaid, her desire to belong to the human world has a twofold purpose, her romantic love for the prince and her yearning for an immortal soul as she says "I would venture anything to win him and an immortal soul." (Tatar 317).

Throughout the film, much importance has been given to the body and body language of women, for instance Hans Christian Andersen describes the little mermaid, the youngest of the six sisters, as "the prettiest of all, her skin was soft and delicate as rose leaf, her eyes as blue as the deepest sea" (Bell 109). However Disney's Ariel reveals



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more than that, her "cleavage, curves and waistlines" (Bell: 1995) seems to preach young teenage girls that one needs to be an 'eye candy' to win the love of the men folk. Disney's pseudo moral didacticism is articulated in the 'Poor Unfortunate Souls' scene where Ursula, the sea witch capitalising on Ariel's innocence preaches her to use "[her] looks! [Her] pretty face! And don't underestimate the importance of your body language..." and with that she jerks and swings her flabby back to the audience. Drawing on Freud's theory, Disney yet again subverts women by presenting us the demonic image of the Medusa in Ursula, as Trites puts in "a lower body made of eight tentacles Ursula seems to be an inverse Medusa figure... a perversion of femininity." (Trites: 1991). With a hoarse manly voice she performs a camp drag show urging Ariel to trade her voice to win the love of the Prince because she believes that "the men up there don't like a lot of blabber... It's she who holds her tongue who gets her man." It appears that through Ursula Disney is trying to convey that the 'voice' is a manifestation of female liberation and hence has no place in a male dominated world. (Sells 182) Unlike in Anderson's tale where the sea witch transforms the mermaid upon her petition, Ursula takes it on herself to convince Ariel for like Ariel she has a desire, the desire to obtain power by overthrowing the sea king. Moreover her diabolic image is magnified by her grotesque, overweight, occupying nearly the whole frame, she towers over Ariel, shimmies and jerks her breasts vulgarising and marginalising the virtues associated with femininity and the feminine form. The fact that beauty and conformity is associated with good while obesity and deformity symbolizes evil relays yet another message that beauty dominates morality and intellectuality in females.

While Andersen's sea hag transforms the mermaid on the condition that she would remain a human until "the prince marries someone else ... [and] thereafter [her] heart will break and [she] will become foam on the crest of the waves." Ursula as Trite states "blatantly equates love with sexuality" (Trites: 1991) when she says "he's got to kiss you - the kiss of true love," and that too within a matter of three days, and so she does - conforming to Ursula's doctrines in tempting her Prince Charming to "kiss her."

Giroux and Rebecca Anne C De Rozario agree on the idea that Ariel uses body language to seduce Prince Eric. (Ross:2004) Laura Sells notes that Ariel consciously falls into Eric's arms, leaning onto him for support while winking to her undersea friends in order to gain his sympathy and love in the film (Sells184). Her constant effort towards enticing the prince to kiss her is accentuated in the song "Kiss the girl" wherein an innocent doe eyed Ariel pouts her lips and bats her eyelids, reducing herself to nothing more than an object of desire. Sebastian manifests Ariel's overt desire to be kissed when he urges the prince to kiss her in the song, "Don't stop now/ Don't try to hide it now/ You want to kiss the girl." It seems that Prince Eric is smitten by Ariel's beauty when he says, "You look - wonderful," when she comes dressed like a princess and stares at her almost forgetting the "voice" that had saved him from drowning, the girl with "that voice" that he was determined to marry. In Andersen's narrative, the prince however appears steadfast and only sees the mermaid as one with "the kindest heart of anyone" and as one who is "devoted." (Tatar, 324). He marries the princesses who, he mistakenly believes had saved him from the ship wreck thus leading to the death of the mermaid.

Disney however eradicates the death motif and instead presents its audience with the conventional happy ending, with the romance plot culminating in marriage between Prince Eric and the "lovesick" Ariel. However marriage takes place but not



before the "final confrontation between good and evil" (Trite: 1991) wherein Ursula in the guise of a "raven - headed ingénue" Vanessa hypnotises Eric into marrying her which though unfulfilled, she certainly achieves her ultimate motive of power by taking hold of King Triton's trident when his daughter turns a mermaid on the third day of sunset. Ursula acquires gigantic proportions once she gains power wrecking havoc in the sea which seems to bring out the message to the audience that in a male dominated society, the rightful owner of power is a man and not a woman. However Ursula's ever increasing man - like power represented by her mammoth figure and her masculine voice is silenced forever not by a woman but by the masculine, Prince Eric by aiming a jagged beam protruding from a ship that pierces somewhere down her breast which further magnifies the sexual connotations within the film.

Trite, terms Disney's "The Little Mermaid" a "sexist" film and poses a question "If Disney must insert a good versus evil conflict into every feature-length fairytale, why-since the studio rewrites the whole story anyway—can't the maid kill the witch herself?" He goes on to answer the question himself concluding "nice girls are not supposed to have that much power." Unlike in Andersen's tale, the little mermaid is provided room enough to make her own decision of accepting death instead of stabbing the prince to regain her life as a mermaid,

Disney's Ariel never achieves subjecthood even though she gets back her voice from Ursula. In the end, her voice serves no purpose even on land as she is merely transferred from the patriarchal world of her father into the realm of her husband. Although both Disney's and Andersen's mermaid gain what they desire in the end, Ariel, her dream prince, and the little mermaid an immortal soul, however in providing her with an immortal soul as a reward for her self sacrifice Andersen seems to strengthen the moral virtues of femininity while Disney's heroine is destined to remain bound within domesticity and conjugal life. While Andersen's mermaid "offers women several paths towards self realization," Disney's Ariel teaches young girls that marriage should be the principal aim of every girl.

Drawing on Mulvey's reflections in her essay "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema", it can be seen that throughout the film Disney presents us women who are "looked at and displayed". While the camera "zooms in" providing us with a grotesque image of Ursula's breast as she shimmies and flaunts it, much attention is also given to Ariel, scantily clad, revealing her curves and cleavage an appearance that is erotic, that reduces her to an object subject to the "male gaze." Disney's purpose is chiefly twofold - first it provides visual pleasure to the audience by repeated emphasis on the body and sexuality, second it also aims at simplifying the moral complexity associated with Andersen's tale because as Sells argues, "Anderson's subtle moral tale is too complex to be grasped by children... and hence a reassurance of a conventional happy ending as Disney imposes." Although she later goes on to state that this moral simplification poses "social hazards." However it cannot be ruled out all together that the films popularity even after years of its release with Disney making a whopping \$76 million in its initial release manifest the fact that conventional norms of love and marriage, conformity, domesticity remains the popular culture for women in today's world. Disney's message "that a girl with the biggest bust, smallest waist and the tightest dress gets the guy," (Olzak) remains accepted till this day.



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## Book Reviews

Rajnath. *Criticism and Culture*. Delhi: Doaba Publications 2011, Pp.194. Rs.150

Professor Rajnath has brought out this collection of his essays and reading it makes one wonder at his amazing staying power. He has devoted his life to Criticism and Theory and managed almost single handed the *Journal of Literary Criticism* from 1984 till 2008. In issue after issue of this well regarded Journal, Rajnath provided scholars a forum to discuss literature and the systematic study of it. *Criticism and Culture* is a collection of Rajnath's writings at different times and on different occasions. It is a sequel to *Critical Speculations* which he published in 1996 and to *Essays in Criticism* which he published in 1971. In those earlier collections Rajnath influenced by the Chicago critics espoused a critical pluralism which contained mostly essays on literature and criticism. In this collection he builds on that foundation but as his title essay shows he is now prepared to go beyond literary criticism to larger questions of culture, albeit with his pluralism intact. In his early writings he was opposed to the monism of the New Critics. In his middle phase he was opposed to the Deconstructionists who seemed to have a programmatic purpose of deconstructing everything. That was for Rajnath excessive and in these essays, in his elegant maturity he espouses with eloquence and conviction a view of literature and the criticism of it which will move beyond an arid formalism to a nuanced acceptance of the political, the social and the ethical dimensions of both. Thus, from an exclusive attention to the words on the page albeit with a syncretic critical stance which allowed multiple levels of interpretation, Rajnath is now writing more and more about morality and substituting his literary-critical pluralism of an earlier vintage with a critical and cultural pluralism. Many of the articles appeared in his own Journal and were usually theme essays which gave direction to many scholars attempting to hone their critical skills. They range from essays on Russian Formalism to Edward Said who receives two solid essays. He engages with the vexed question of critical monism and its opposite a critical pluralism. He also touches on questions of the personal and the impersonal in modern thought, the question of Wordsworth's morality, and gives us illuminating insights into Scllovsky, Derrida and the use of metaphor. He also balances these theoretical concerns with essays where he practices a form of practical criticism in analyses of Keats' "Ode on a Grecian Urn", Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral* and *The Cocktail Party*. The collection is rounded off to my utter satisfaction by Rajnath's genuflection in the direction of Indian criticism and Indian aesthetics and a speculation on how literary criticism should organize itself in the new millennium. If Rajnath sounds a bit pontifactory he may be forgiven this tone of voice. I believe he has earned it.

The selection begins with an essay on Russian Formalism which for Rajnath is an antidote to the excesses of both New Criticism and Deconstruction. If New Criticism was monist and privileged the Poem at the expense of Drama and Fiction Deconstruction is a kind of critical monism in its seeking to find aporia in each and every work of literature. It is quite easy to deconstruct once you have the knack of doing so. I have myself been tired with the kind of analysis someone like Paul de Man carried out because of the predictable unpredictability of his procedure and I realized that I had

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exchanged New Critical monism for another kind of monism. I, therefore, agree with Rajnath that we must move beyond this kind of monism to a critical pluralism and that the Russian Formalists do show the way, or rather they had shown the way at least a few decades before we were deluged by the Deconstructionists. Russian Formalism is balanced in its insistence on the literary and in making a clear distinction between literature and other kinds of writing which for it is not literary. Rajnath is happy about this distinction and as such he takes his place against formulations like that of Hayden White or J.L. Austin where this distinction is broken down and we are told about the performative aspects of writing and the fictive nature of all writing and the tropics of discourse. As opposed to the privileging of metaphor in Deconstructionist criticism Russian Formalism allows for rhythm in poetry and plot in fiction as agents of literariness. But we are still in this tradition on the borders of ethical criticism and an acceptance of the Word and the World. For that Rajnath turns to Said.

Said is one critic whom Rajnath can accept because of his ability to attend to the words on the page and the variety of narrative, while insisting on the text's play with the world. In Rajnath's scheme of things an arid formalism without the leaven of the social is poor criticism. That is why in his admiration he has space for two essays on Said—one on Said and post colonial theory and the other on Said as an apostle of resistance and oppositional criticism but someone also practicing the civilized virtue of tolerance and the need to move on to reconciliation. Said, in Rajnath's view, therefore, emerges as a holistic critic and he is absolutely spot on. If one goes through, shall we say the *Norton Anthology of Literary Theory* one is struck by the sheer plenitude of critical and theoretical positions and the variety of literary and social concerns. But one does feel that most critics are pushing a single agenda be it Author function (Foucault), Reader (Barthes), Consciousness (Poulet) or Gender (the Feminists of different persuasions). But in Said we see not only a healthy respect for the literary but also an acute consciousness of the World and the Word in the World. That makes him a complete critic and Rajnath's own criticism is often modeled on him.

It is not possible in a review like this to summarize all the pages of this densely written set of essays but one can certainly highlight some issues with which Rajnath engages. We have considered his views on monism but we have not mentioned his final take on the matter. It is not that Rajnath is completely against monism but that he finds it excessive. At the same time he is also suspicious of the critical pluralism which he has advanced for a while and suggests that in the name of pluralism we may be practising an academic *laissez faire* which leads to anarchy. Rajnath is sufficiently Arnoldian to have a healthy disrespect for anarchy and he asserts the point that even in our Pocomo (not Rajnath's expression) context we need to have some sense of a centre which will hold. Rajnath is clear that in our post condition we cannot take an essentialist position and assert anything like a hegemonic position which does not take care of the pluralistic possibilities. The New Critics, he says, reduce all literary considerations to the level of language and this is a reductive critical monism at work. It has had a vogue as all of us are well aware of. The Chicago Critics attempted to open things up a bit basing themselves on an Aristotelian foundation and Rajnath who in his middle phase was 'ygone' to R.S. Crane thinks this was a step towards some kind of pluralism. Critics like



Crane were able to see the importance of the literary problems a writer faced and a reference to his whole work was in order for them.. These critics respected the objectives of their writers and arrived at critical judgements with a healthy respect for the way the writer engaged with those objectives and this allowed considerable variety and an avoidance of the single point New Critical stance. Rajnath makes the important statement that while Marx was a great admirer of Homer and one may add of German lyric poetry, the Marxists ( among whom Marx himself does not find himself!) are monists. Even Said does not quite avoid monism though he is a proponent of cultural pluralism. Rajnath reviews the work of several critics and arrives at the formulation that while monism is not alright because it is a handmaiden of Enlightenment Universalism ( which is European and culture specific) "post" criticism has also lead to anarchy and that too must be avoided. In another essay on critical pluralism Rajnath asserts that in the name of pluralism we cannot also accept anything like a critical *laissez faire* because we need also to hold on to the central focus or idea of a work. Rajnath seems to be hinting that critical pluralism should not descend into anarchy, that some semblance of order is also needed Thus a healthy monism is needed.

I do not know if Rajnath is inclined to *Advaita* but I believe he would do well to consider the possibility of analyzing literature and the world from the point of view of the monism of *Advaita*. What this will reveal is that in creative ways *Advaita* acknowledges the presence of difference and even chaos. We in India have, as Rajiv Malhotra has pointed out, learnt to manage difference, something the West has not been able to do because its Judaeo- Christian culture provides for a Book or a Master. The Book has mattered in very destructive ways and the present crisis of the West is in a way attributable to this obsession. The Western Self is seen in binary opposition to everything else and all that is relegated to the position of the Other. Literary and Social Criticism on an *Advaitic* base can celebrate difference but see this difference as really part of an inner unity -a great organizing principle. In India we have learnt not to be afraid of chaos and to see it as part of a greater principle. The West is afraid of Chaos and posits a monism of intolerance. I was looking for some Indian dimension ( as the late CDN would say) in Rajnath's otherwise incisive analysis of monism and pluralism but did not find anything explicit. That if you like is a flaw and I do believe that Rajnath has been thinking of it and can remedy the defect if it can be called that. .

Indeed in his exchange with Ragini Ramachandra who felt that there was a necessity to use Sanskrit poetics more freely in literary criticism, I see Rajnath already making his point on what I have just said. I am in some sympathy with the view that an Indian dimension should be brought into play in our engagement with literature but I am also equally clear that it should not be a procrustean bed which irons out all that does not fit. My advancement of the *Advaitic* position does not countenance monism and what is more, as Rajnath would want it, there is in the procedure a recognition of the need for some ordering principle in criticism. It provides one a framework of order and a prop to pluralism. I can only quote Rajnath in support of my view.: " In the age of globalization and multiculturalism, a healthy attitude has to be pluralistic. Pluralism paves the way for reconciliation and peaceful co-existence. In the realm of criticism it helps one appreciate the wide variety of literary creations. In the absence of pluralism there will



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be unnecessary and undesirable clashes and conflicts. But pluralism also needs the prop of monism without which it will lose direction." That just about sums up my own position.

Rajnath is a wise and judicious critic. He is not given to extremities and in this collection of essays he has shown the way to younger scholars. I commend this book to the reading public.

Mohan Ramanan

Basavaraj Naikar. *The Frolic Play of the Lord*. New Delhi: Authors Press, Pp.180+x. Rs.475

I have just read *The Frolic Play of the Lord*, an English translation of Chamarasa's (A.D. 1450) Kannada classic *Prabhulinga Lile* by Dr. Basavaraj Naikar in two sittings and felt so deeply influenced that I literally waded through each chapter or book in a quick succession. The visuals of the known and the unknown, the phenomena and the Noumena, the mundane and the spirituality, certainty and doubt, attachment and detachment, gross and the subtle and illusion and reality presented here as woof and weft of all the characters are both general and particular. The character of the mighty Allama who literally sculpted and blew life into the great ones like Basava and others sweeps across the work as an unparalleled colossus.

In this work of twenty-five *Gatis* or Books Chamarasa's Allama is the quintessence of the spiritual glory as conceived by the best minds in Virasaiva epistemology. And those who are familiar with Chamarasa's original have enough reason to go on record that this excellent translation by Naikar in the form of exquisite prose-bits reflects the original in all its myriad spiritual colours and hues. In this realistically and imaginatively trans-created work the virtuoso of the translator lies in his perception of the possibility of modern readings and interpretations of this medieval Kannada classic, that too an overtly religious one of which the chief protagonist is Allama.

The second priority of the translator seems to have arisen from his desire to explore the possibility of presenting Allama to our own time with all the facets of his multi-dimensional effulgence and yet simplistic spiritual persona. From this point of view *The Frolic Play of the Lord* is as much a reader's delight as it is of the translator.

Retaining much of the subtleties of the old world aura of Virasaiva religion, philosophy, theology and spirituality, the work as such is a graphic narrative that in the hands of the translator has achieved a rare synthesis in terms of a reflective scripture that in its unhurried pace make a distinctive spiritual sense of the characters portrayed here. The story of *The Frolic Play of the Lord* as told in the Kannada is in itself an innovative one and conceived imaginatively by Chamarasa. He differs considerably from the similar narratives by Harihara, Harishwara, Parvatesha, Marirachavattisha and others. The newness or the novelty that is conspicuous in Chamarasa's work seems to be the result of the shift occurred over the centuries in regard to Allama, who until then was understood to be one who has transformed himself from that of a worldling to the highest level of spiritual eminence. But Chamarasa in tune with the general mood existing in the 15th century was inclined to view Allama as the incarnation

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of the incorruptible divine entity that could never be caught in the snares of the worldly entanglements even if it were to be the love of a beautiful princess. And this is where Chamarasa offers a strong contrast with other poets who for historical reasons associate Allama's early life with a woman. Consequently Chamarasa's work is a sort of magical narrative glorifying the *lilas* or the sports of the divine entity in action. The translator in his beautifully minted proso-poetic bits has wrapped up all that in a style that has trans-created those magical moments charged with powerful spiritual overtones unveiling the work's philosophical and spiritual grandeur.

For instance those *Gatis* or Books that deal with the exchanges between Allama and Princess Maya, Allama and Muktai, Allama and Marulusankaradeva, Allama and Siddharama, Allama and Goggayya and Allama and Basava in this translation are not only vivid and sophisticated but as presented in their surreal settings steal the reader's attention. Especially the encounters between Allama and Maya and Allama and Muktai will unfailingly help recall the famous talks that Gargi, Maitreyi, Vachaknavi, Apala and others in ancient India had with their mentors. The moves of Maya, the temptress, whose bids to adhere and seduce Allama, seem to make one thing very clear that the worldly charms are but ephemeral and transient and clinging to them inexorably would only spell doom. The persona of Allama that emerges here is both radiant and luminous suggesting there is everything in rising and nor in falling. In this context each episode is a lesson in spirituality trans-created by Naikar investing his own experimental readings into the Virasaiva lore. In this process he has transformed each *Gati* into a scintillating narrative capable of arousing a higher sense of consciousness in the reader.

By the time we come to the end of our reading of the work we invariably feel that we had heard at length an enlightening socio-spiritual sermon sitting at the feet of a great master. The mighty Allama has unfolded a sure path to self-realization and the work in the process being turned into a celebration of the Allamystique by Dr. Naikar subjects us into introspection about our own multilayered individual identities. In the *Gati* 13, where we read about the epistemological clash between Allama and Siddharama it was the latter who with his self-aggrandized demonic fury tried to reduce the former to ashes, who triumphs in the ultimate was Allama, the effulgent symbol of knowledge. Siddharama concedes his defeat with these words: "I bow down to your feet. Kindly, therefore, show me the path of liberation and teach me the way of conquering death and attaining the Reality. I do not want to argue any more" (*Gati* 13, 57).

In the recent decades modern scholarship has demonstrated that the vachana-centric Virasaiva or Lingayat literature produced in the last eight or nine centuries is no longer studied as purely a religious one or in isolation of its social relevance. Its genuine secular and spirito-people-centric credentials have been widely recognized. In this context the episodes depicted in *The Frolic Play of the Lord* can offer refreshing readings into human psyche and its complex interiors. These stunningly portrayed instances in their trans-creation stand comparison to the best of their kind in world literature, thus placing the vachana-centric literature on a platform for view by one and all. For this the characters of Princess Maya and Muktai, Siddharama and Goggayya stand testimony. These distraught men and women troubled by their own desires, worries or angst finally see the light at the end of the tunnel. For Princess Maya, who sought to be one with Allama amorously but failed Allama was revealed thus: "Allama, the divine dissembler, who teases the humankind by his tricks, pretended to be in the



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company of Princess Maya, but yet not allowing her to indulge in the amorous sport. Nobody could ever understand the mystery of his nature" (*Gati* 5, 48). These words seem to reaffirm the incorruptibility of the divine entity that was inseparably lodged in Allama and that was what Chamarasa desired most to glorify in his work, which in *The Frolic Play of the Lord* is astoundingly recreated.

Allama's approach to human predicament is humane and rational. Being a tangible ford to cross over the ocean of doubt and dilemma Allama tells Muktai: "Although a baby is used to mother's breast-milk, it is weaned from it by being fed gradually on other items of food. Similarly you should learn to forget the external world and try to dwell in your inner being" (*Gati* 12, 16).

Readers of Kannada *Prabhulinga Lile* usually carry the impression that the spiritual elements that go into the making of Allama are not borrowed; rather they are conceived and developed by Chamarasa's genius only to alter and influence the notions about Allama held sacrosanct till then. In this context all the encounters depicted in this work are justifiably enough defining moments in Allama's life as much as they are in the lives of others. Therefore each *Gati* or Book is crafted with a great spiritualist's romance and a practitioner's appetite. In the process Chamarasa's Allama is turned into an abiding metaphor for the highest kind of spiritualism. And Basavaraj Naikar's transcreation of all this is intense, lyrical, excellently communicative and never at once missing the magic artistry of a seasoned trans-creator promising a delectable reading throughout.

What emerge finally in this work are the mighty Allama's concern, generosity and sympathy in a spiritual crisis. This is the echo that the readers of this translation hear reverberating in their ears. Allama resembles the Sun and all other characters revolve around in his light doubting, prodding, questioning, sometimes in their submissive tender voices and sometimes exhibiting combative spirit in their quest for reorientation of their already chosen spiritual path. In this context *The Frolic Play of the Lord* is bound to move and affect the readers to a better understanding of their own spiritual self in contrast to their worldly existence. The lived experiences of Virasaivism, though regional, seem to have accomplished a status of universal appeal in this work fully qualified to be termed as an excellent contribution to Oriental literature. Dr. Basavaraj Naikar's is a daring attempt at retrieving an invaluable Kannada classic in English. His prudence, erudition and his distinguished background have enabled him to delve deep into the subject and the result being the recreation of a seamless work of literary art that blends the real and the surreal magnificently.

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Munir, *The New Criticism*. Delhi: Adhyayan Publishers & Distributors, India, 2011. Hardbound. I-XII, 251 pages. Rs.695. ISBN 978-81-8435-251-1

Structured with seven chapters, Munir's book *The New Criticism* presents a comprehensive picture of the literary critical movement in English literature which thrived in America between 1930s and 1960s. The New Critics, as they came to be called, were primarily philosophers and culture critics as well. Dissatisfied with the existing hazy and haphazard criticism, they raised their voice against the prevalent

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critical practice. Under the influence of the unprecedented progress of science, history, social science and other arts, criticism had taken a new course with multifarious approaches which caused it to deviate from its true goal. Numerous approaches were developed but none provided the critic with genuine tools of criticism. Recourse to science could be of advantage but complete dependence on it detracted the readers from the spirit of the poem and led them to baffling terms and ideas. It was desired that an approach be developed where the focus should fall on the ontology and being of the poem. The new critics through their essays proclaimed their goal and the nature of critical practice. All of them laid emphasis on the autonomy and organic unity of the poem.

Although a shift had already been made from the poet to the poem and the entire energy of the critics was spent on the textual analysis, the ground for the new critics was paved at the turn of the century by critics and philosophers like Hulme, Pound, Richards, Leavis and Empson. They played a significant role in giving a turn to the hitherto rickety and effete critical practices. It is the truth they were also inspired by many ideas of Coleridge who was far ahead of his time and even during the Romantic age gave many noteworthy ideas for the coming generation of thinkers and critics to work on. These critics got benefited much from the rich ideas that Coleridge gave talking for the first time about the organic unity of the poem. But even these critics were concerned much with 'what' ness of the poem rather than the 'how' ness of the poem. They were simply trying to derive ideas and philosophies from the poem leaving aside the question of its aesthetic and poetic traits working behind its creation. Lost in a labyrinth of diverse approaches-philosophical, moralistic, impressionistic, biographical, historical, psychological, and socio-economic and political-they fail to give a pattern and structure to their critical practices confounding the whole business. Rather than grappling with the poem itself, they devote much of their labour and energy to the extrinsic sources. This leaves them with a blurred vision resulting in confusion and chaos. The new criticism emerged as a reaction to this. However the role of T. S. Eliot and others cannot be denied altogether. At least they started the discussion and expressed their objection to the preceding and existing condition of poetry and poetics. A striking feature of the book under review is that the whole of the first chapter is devoted to the precursors to the new criticism providing rich details about their ideas and critical temper. Major theories of Eliot are discussed in detail giving the readers an insight into the persona of Eliot as a critic. There is a wealth of valuable information on Hulme, Pound, Richards, Leavis, and Empson. The reader, before jumping to the New Criticism is served with a sumptuous feast on these important critics whose value and historical significance remains unquestioned. This next chapter entitled 'The New Criticism' dwells upon the nature, dimensions, significance and also the decay of this literary critical movement. Disenchanted and fed up with the modern urbanised and industrialised society, the new critics strive for order, pattern and structure both in society as well as poetry. The Agrarian Southern culture, though backward and less developed has special appeal for them as a source of inspiration. Having firm faith in the organizing capacity of poetry, they give it the status of surrogate religion. They cherish a staunch belief that the fragmented self and split psyche of the modern complex society could be restructured and restored through the therapeutic effects of poetry. Badly disillusioned by the culture



of the North, they take recourse to the philosophical aesthetics of Kant, Schopenhauer, Schlegels, Schilling and Coleridge. Thus they draw heavily on the German idealist thinkers as well as Coleridge who left a tremendous impression on them and helped them formulate their critical tenets. Poetry to the new critics is an entity in itself without any extrinsic and additional features required for its existence. It is like a living organism where parts are associated to form an organic whole. The individual parts have been arranged symmetrically and they contribute in their own way to maintain the beauty of the whole. This is the reason, they argue, why poetry cannot be paraphrased. Discussing the credo of the New Critics and endorsing their views Munir tries to encapsulate what they mean by poetry:

The New Critics hold that a poem is neither an idea nor statement, nor philosophy nor history. It is a verbal construct, an object made by human, or a concrete entity like a painting. Therefore, they ruthlessly attack those approaches of criticism which give information about the work of art. When we look at a painting, we never take an external and extra recourse to appreciate it. We do not need any information outside the painting to experience its aesthetic beauty. We do not need any biography or personal information of the artist because his painting is autonomous, self-contained, and self-sufficient concrete object. Similarly, a poem, like painting, is an art. It has its own "universe of discourse", its own meaning and significance, and its own ontology and being. (64-65)

Having given a detailed peep into the genesis, development and the salient features of the New Criticism, Munir, in the following chapters takes up five American critics one by one, naming the chapters after them, explaining, discussing and analysing their representative essays containing their theories and critical notions. The critics included for study are John Crow Ransom, Allen Tate, Cleanth Brooks, Richard Palmer Blackmur and W.K. Wimsatt. These critics have their heterogeneous ideas and theories with regard to poetry and poetic but in some way or the other all of them focus on the ontology or the "beingness" of the poem. Their critical endeavour is directed towards arriving at a method, developing a pattern, creating a formula to make a complete comprehension of poetry through an analysis of its technical as well as thematic aspect. The new critics don't consider the poetic process simply an instance of intuition and inspiration. It involves a lot of labour, and perspiration on the part of the creative artist. Like any other fine arts, poetic creation is also a craft. What it misses is proper training and cultivation of taste among readers to appreciate good poetry. Ransom takes the business of criticism very seriously suggesting there should be a proper and formal training for criticism and the university professors should come forward in this direction. The real function of criticism is not to paraphrase or give a synopsis but it is the study of the techniques of art. Allen Tate disapproves of the undue intervention and encroachment of science on life as well as poetry. He considers it highly responsible for spoiling the whole business of criticism. He discovers a common feature in poetry calling it "tension". It can be more or less compared to what Brooks tries to explain in terms of irony and paradox. Brooks believes that metaphor, paradox, intellect, gesture, irony, wit and dramatic attitude are the some of the tools that contribute to the constitution of a piece of poetry. They are intrinsic to the poem providing organic unity to it. He has great objection to the tendency of paraphrasing a poem and terms it the



"heresy of paraphrase" in one of his essays. Giving the theory of structure he talks about the organic beauty of the poem where patterning of sounds, rhythm and even pauses carry a meaning that is lost in the process of paraphrase. R. P. Blackmoor gives his idea of gesture with relation to poetry defining it as a quality of poetry which fills the common words used in it with layers of meanings making the language vibrant and alive in the hands of the poet. Dissatisfied with the state of criticism in America, he puts the responsibility on the shoulders of the reader, the writer and the society to give it a serious thought and do something to cultivate healthy taste and propagate rich literary values. Wimsatt through his representative essays advocates the idea that the poem is a pure linguistic artefact. Through the analogies of human form and plants he emphasises the organic wholeness of a poem where every item contributes towards its aesthetic appeal. He talks about certain fallacies prevalent in the critical practice of analysing a work of art with a suggestion to avoid them as they generally mislead the reader. The analysis of each part of the poem is required with a focus on the total value. Interpretation of single items in isolation will spoil the whole job.

Credit goes to Dr. Munir for presenting the representative essays of the New Critics with a detailed discussion and analytical commentary clarifying their complicated views and theoretical ideas in a very systematic and organised manner. These essays are hardly dealt with in any other book in a sequence. One can get a general overview scattered in books written with a historical perspective. It is a great job done by the writer who realizing the difficulties of the students was judicious enough to serve them with this feast. In his foreword to the book Alan Johnson, Professor of English, Dept. of English and Philosophy, Idaho State University, aptly remarks: "Munir's introduction to the New Critics will provide a salutary companion to introductions to more recent and influential theories of literary analysis." (viii)

It is hoped the book will not only familiarize the readers with the literary critical movement The New Criticism but also help them sharpen the faculties of analysis and reflection.

Sarfaraz Nawaz

T. Sai Chandra Mauli (Editor) *Virtuoso: A Refereed Transnational Bi-Annual Journal of Language and Literature in English*. August, 2011

The Journal under review provides a deep insight into the understanding of contemporary writers. The articles are very innovative and interesting as they touch almost all forms of literature: fiction, drama, poetry translation, English language teaching and autobiography. A separate section is dedicated to the eminent and emerging poets of India. T. Sai Chandra Mauli's work as the editor is really commendable. In his editorial note he has emphasized the need and significance of this journal where there is no dearth of journals in India.

The articles 1, 5, 7, 8 focus on the emergence of a powerful, self reliant and confident woman who is ready to change the world. Manish Mukta and Ghanshyam's essay (no. 5) deals with theme of women's protest against the patriarchal norms and value systems

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which sabotage female identity. "She rather chooses to create a new path for herself, of her own dictates of tradition and society where upon she progress with full confidence and strength." Anish Kumar's essay is discourse on the figuration of women in the poetry of Margaret Atwood and Kamla Das. He claims "the female heroes boldly ente into phallo-centric cultural space that treats them as sex object."

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Jayadeep Sarangi's article (no. 12) provides an incisive interpretation of Dalit history and literature. He traces the various challenges faced by Dalit literature and writers. He says "the basic element of Dalit literature is biographical". Sumith Arshi (no. 10) has done a remarkable job in her research to trace the history of the development of Indian drama from Bharatmuni, Kalidasa to Mahesh Dattani. The article on Shiv K. Kumar's novel is comprehensive. The writer has done justice to his novels.

Shri Lata's essay deeply renders the significant issue of multiculturalism in Jeannette Armstrong's short story. The impact of colonizers is trenchant in the native country and to eradicate this influence from psyche of the natives will be just impossible.

Lilipushpa Nayak's essay (no.16) is very inspiring. She shares her experience of translating three Oria texts. She says that translation is not only translation of language but also translation of human emotions, relationship and cultural ethos of that region and religion.

The essays deal with the issue of English language teaching. English is the global language of communication. Besides talking about the classroom management attention is drawn to students active participation to assess the skills of their classmates.

The journal deserves more rigorous proof reading so that printing errors do not mar its quality for example 'Shiv K Kumar's novels: A Critique on Indian Society' (title of an article) 'of' should have been used in place of 'on'. Omission of Lilipushpa Nayak's name from the Contributors list obviously hurts the sentiments of the contributor.

Mamata Dixit

Nalini Shyam Kamil, *Symphony of Desire : Myth in the Mainstream Indian English Novel* (New Delhi : Adhyayan Publishers, 2010), pp. 157+xvii, Price : Rs. 450/-, ISBN : 978-81-8435-217-7

The book under review makes reasonably comprehensive contributions in the area of myth criticism as used in the mainstream Indian English Novel. The chapters are devoted to Raja Rao (*The Serpent and the Rope*), R.K. Narayan (*The Man Eater of Malgudi*), Salman Rushdie (*Midnight's Children*), Amitav Ghosh (*The Circle of Reason*) and Shashi Tharoor (*The Great Indian Novel*). The introduction makes a scholarly exposition of the linear, circular and the spiral approaches to myth as theorized by distinguished scholars like Sir J.G. Frazer, Malinowski, C.G. Jung, Arnold Toynbee, Oswald Spengler, among others.

*The Serpent and the Rope* is viewed as part of an allegorical process which is collecting and coalescing together folktales, rituals, legends and Puranic elements into the binaries

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of illusion (Maya) and reality (God). The chapter is a delight to read as it attempts at uncovering the layers of meaning that the novel's endless suggestivity warrants.

R.K. Narayan's *The Man Eater of Malgudi* is a classic in itself as it generates a sense of contemporaneity out of an ancient myth that relates to Lord Shiva and the devil Bhasmasura. Through a deft handling of language, Nalini establishes the inside out of a metaphor because the Simile still divides into two (Shiva and Bhasmasura) before it becomes a metaphor. Nalini tries to show that metaphor is an integrality of vision that hides within its own multiple selves various kinds of binaries which have their transaction at various cognitive levels.

The chapter on *Midnight's Children* masterfully presents the historical and political events of the recent past by adopting a method that relies upon the technique of contextualism and parallelism. Salman Sinai is the focal point where, as Nalini Skilfully shows, congeries of different and even warring experiences are held together as if by a magical narrative sequence that is not only seminal to the novel but also seminal to the way Nalini perceives it.

The chapter on *The Circle of Reason* is a display of skilful presentation that is not lagging behind in the high degrees of imagination. Nalini views Amitav Ghosh's use of Nachiketa myth as man's endless quest for self understanding within the boundaries of human reason. However, Nalini exposes the pretensions of such an approach which encircles man within a logic that every time defeats itself it claims to have reached the climax.

Shashi Tharoor's *The Great Indian Novel*, supplements the Indian mega-text known as Mahabharata. The postmodern idiom activates a terrain of thought that tries to relive five thousand years of Indian historical reality as History itself becomes a character, and this is shown beautifully by Nalini. The interpretive paradigms create a low-Church version of an extremely serious epic written by the foremost Indian poet Ved Vyasa. Nalini has honest disagreements because irony, satire and humour cannot define the high serious note that Indian literary tradition has been a representative of.

Viewed on the whole, Nalini's book with a highly apt title creates an impression that one will not do better without reading this book. The drawbacks, if any, may appear to be arising from Nalini's excessive use of the primary sources. This was inevitable though. I commend the book as a welcome edition to myth criticism and Indian English Novel by Nalini as an acceptably high degree of contribution to the existing scholarship in the field. The publishers also deserve thanks for publishing the book excellently well.

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### Books & Journals Received

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- Kalpana Rajput (Ed.), *Swami Nem Pal's Pearls of Wisdom (Vol. III)*, Madhu Publications, Badaun, 2007.
- Basavaraj Naikar, (Translated from the Kannada) *The Frolic Play of the Lord (Prabhulinga Lile)* GNOSIS, New Delhi, 2010.
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